

Versions Of The Bible

Introduction. Perhaps this is being overly cynical, but there are a couple of good reasons for the recent multiplication of versions. The first reason is money. The Bible is the best-selling book of all time. New versions can be very profitable for publishing companies. The second reason is to promote doctrines not taught in Bible. What better way to convince someone of a false doctrine than to include it in a new version?

It is good to include a study of Bible versions. People need to be aware of versions they use because some actually pose a threat to unsuspecting brethren. With this in mind, we are going to briefly review of some popular versions.

I. ***A Brief History Of Versions***

- A. The first Bible from movable type was printed in Latin by Johann Gutenberg in 1455. Since that time there have been more than 500 versions of New Testament and translations in more than 1,000 dialects.
- B. The Bible does not promise that every version is reliable in every place (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:25). The failure to discern between translations can be dangerous.
- C. Definitions:
 1. A "translation" is a rendering from one language into another.
 2. A "version" is a particular translation such as the KJV, ASV, NASB, NIV, etc.
- D. English translators and versions:
 1. Wycliffe, 1382. This was the first English version of the complete Bible.
 2. Tyndale, 1526. This was the first to be translated from the original Hebrew and Greek. It comprises 92% of the KJV.
 3. Coverdale, 1535. This was the first complete printed Bible in English and it was the first in England to circulate without official hindrance.
 4. Matthew's Bible, 1537. This was produced by John Rogers and was a combined edition of Tyndale and Coverdale.
 5. Great Bible, 1539. This was named for its size (15" by 10"). It was the first of the English Bibles authorized to be read in the churches.
 6. Geneva Bible, 1560. This was the first version to print each verse as a paragraph and to put words in italics not represented in the original texts. It was the Bible of the Pilgrims who journeyed to America and of Shakespeare.
 7. Bishops' Bible, 1568. This was a revision of the Great Bible produced by the English clergy.

8. Rheims-Douay, 1609. This was the first Roman Catholic edition of the English Bible and its purpose was to attempt to counteract the influence of other versions.
9. King James, 1611. This is referred to as the "Authorized Version." James Stuart of Scotland commissioned its development and forty-seven scholars were used in its production.
10. English Revised Version, 1881-1885.
11. American Standard Version, 1901.
12. Revised Standard Version, 1946-1952.
13. New English Bible, 1961.
14. New American Standard Bible, 1971.
15. New International Version, 1978.
16. New King James Version, 1982.

II. ***How Do I Know Which Version To Use?***

- A. Is the scholarship in the translation produced by an individual or a group?
- B. Is it a translation or a paraphrase? There are two basic approaches:
 1. "Formal Equivalence" attempts to translate the words and nuances of the original as literally as possible, provided that no actual violence is done to English usage. Weigle and Bruce, though promoters of modern versions, have conceded that the ERV and the ASV are the most meticulously accurate versions in English.
 2. "Dynamic Equivalence" attempts to convey the meaning of the text in free and idiomatic English with less regard for the exact wording of the original. Many passages thus become commentaries. D. A. Carson, a defender of this method, admitted that it can lead to all sorts of freedoms with respect to translation, and can increase the chances for subjective bias.
- C. Is its theological bias liberal or conservative?
- D. How does it differ from ASV or the NKJV?
- E. Does it teach doctrinal error?

III. ***A Survey Of Versions***

- A. The King James Version.
 1. The translators were noted for their scholarship and for their reverent attitude toward the Bible. While they could benefit from modern advances in textual criticism, many modern translators could benefit from their attitude toward the Bible.
 2. Some words have changed meanings since 1611:
 - a) Matthew 3:15, "suffer" = allow.
 - b) Mark 6:25, "charger" = platter.
 - c) Luke 15:8, "candle" = lamp.

- d) Luke 17:7, "by and by" = immediately.
 - e) Acts 17:3, "allege" = prove.
 - f) Acts 21:15, "carriages" = baggage.
 - g) Acts 28:13, "fetched a compass" = sailed around.
 - h) Romans 1:13, "let" = hinder.
 - i) 1 Corinthians 13:1-7, "charity" = love.
 - j) 2 Corinthians 8:1, "do you to wit" = make known to you.
 - k) Galatians 6:6, "communicate" = share with.
 - l) Philippians 1:27, "conversation" = conduct.
 - m) 1 Thessalonians 4:15, "prevent" = precede.
3. Some mistranslated passages:
- a) In Acts 2:27, 31, the word "hell" would be better translated as "hades." In the KJV, "hell" represents three Greek words:
 - (1) Acts 2:27, 31; Matthew 16:18, "Hades."
 - (2) Matthew 10:28, "Gehenna."
 - (3) 2 Peter 2:4, "Tartaroo."
 - b) In Acts 12:4, the word "Easter" is used. The Geneva Bible used "passover." Of 29 occurrences in the New Testament, the KJV renders each "passover" except Acts 12:4. The KJV followed the Bishops' Bible in Acts 12:4.
 - c) In Hebrews 6:6, there is no "if" in the original text. This mistranslation was influenced by Theodore Beza (cf. ASV).
 - d) In Hebrews 10:38, "any man" is not in the original text (cf. ASV).
 - e) In Deuteronomy 24:1-4, the first three verses are conditional clauses and vs. 4 is the conclusion clause.
- B. The New King James Version.
- 1. The NKJV maintains the use of italics that the KJV popularized. Verse numbers in bold type indicate paragraph beginnings. Oblique type indicates an Old Testament quotation. Explanatory notes discuss alternate translations, cross-references and New Testament citations of Old Testament passages are found in footnotes.
 - 2. Comparison with KJV.
 - a) Mark 1:30, "and anon they tell him of her" = "and they told Him about her at once."
 - b) Acts 9:27, "he assayed to join himself to the disciples" = "he tried to join the disciples."
 - c) Matthew 26:73, "thy speech bewrayeth thee" = "your speech betrays you."
 - d) Hebrews 10:29, "hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace" = "insulted the Spirit of grace."
 - e) 1 Peter 3:11, "let him eschew evil ... seek peace, and ensue it" = "let him turn away from evil ... seek peace, and pursue it."

- f) Acts 19:38, "let them implead one another" = "let them bring charges against one another."
 - g) 2 Corinthians 7:8, "I do not repent, though I did repent" = "I do not regret it; though I did regret it."
 - h) Other examples include 2 Corinthians 3:13; Ezekiel 41:7; Exodus 3:22; Luke 15:8; Genesis 1:28; 4:23; 10:11; 12:6; 15:2; Exodus 32:25; 1 Kings 20:38; Numbers 11:25; John 12:6; 1 Peter 1:7; et. al.
- C. The American Standard Version.
1. This is considered to be the most exact translation in use.
 2. Some mistranslated passages:
 - a) John 9:38 (footnote), the word "worshiped" may be used of creatures (Matthew 18:26; Revelation 3:9), but not in John 9:38. The context must determine its proper use.
 - b) In Matthew 28:1, "late on the sabbath" should say "after the sabbath" (cf. Mark 16:1-2 and the NKJV).
 - c) In Ephesians 3:15, "every family" is misleading. The KJV is better.
- D. The New American Standard Bible.
1. This is a revision of the ASV. Several good features are explained in the Preface.
 2. Some mistranslated passages:
 - a) Matthew 5:17, "did not come to abolish the law;" Ephesians 2:15, "by abolishing in His flesh the enmity." There is a difference in destroying (overthrowing) the law and abolishing (abrogating) the law (cf. ASV).
 - b) Romans 4:9, "as righteousness" should be "for righteousness."
 - c) 1 Corinthians 5:1, 9-11; 6:12-20, "immorality" should be more specific.
 - d) Philippians 2:6, "existed" should be the present participle "existing."
 - e) Matthew 16:19, older printings used a future perfect translation, "... shall have been bound in heaven ... shall have been loosed in heaven." This is also found in the NIV footnote. The future perfect rendering is endorsed by A. T. Robertson, Lenski, Reinecker, et.al. but opposed by Hendriksen because this reading yields a very difficult and unnatural sense.
- E. The Revised Standard Version.
1. This version omitted the use of italics and therefore it is much more difficult to determine which words were added by translators.
 2. The translators were opposed to deity of Christ:
 - a) "Thou" and "thee" address God; "you" addresses Jesus (cf. Matthew 16:16; John 17:11).

- b) Isaiah 7:14, "young woman" is not the same as "virgin." In Luke 1:34, "I have no husband" is not the same as "I know not a man."
 - c) Genesis 2:24 implies marriage is a mere earthly occurrence rather than a divine ordinance.
 - d) Colossians 2:8, "elemental spirits of the universe." Personal beings are foreign to context.
- F. The English Standard Version.
1. This version, the work of more than 100 people, appeared in 2001.
 - a) The preface expresses the motivating force behind the ESV and echoes the translators of the KJV: "God's sacred word is that inestimable treasure that excelleth all the riches of the earth."
 - b) The translation closely follows the RSV of 1971 without its objectionable features.
 2. Strengths of the ESV.
 - a) Translators used the latest collection of Hebrew and Greek documents, giving it the strongest textual foundation ever seen in a version.
 - b) Its translators attempted to carry over every possible nuance of meaning in the original words of scripture into our language.
 - (1) The publisher states that the ESV is an "essentially literal" translation "that seeks as far as possible to capture the precise wording of the original text and the personal style of each Bible writer. As such, its emphasis is on 'word for word' correspondence ..." (vii).
 - (2) "We have sought to be 'as literal as possible' while maintaining clarity of expression and literary excellence" (viii).
 - (3) "We have sought to use the same English word for important recurring words in the original; and, as far as grammar and syntax allow, we have rendered Old Testament passages cited in the New in ways that show their correspondence" (viii).
 3. Examples of the ESV translation.
 - a) In Job 36:33, the KJV states, "The noise thereof sheweth concerning it, the cattle also concerning the vapour." The ESV states, "Its crashing declares his presence; the cattle also declare that he rises."
 - b) In 2 Corinthians 6:12, the KJV states, "You are straightened in your own bowels." The KJV states, "You are restricted in your own affections."
 - c) Matthew 28:1, "Now after the Sabbath."
 - d) Mark 6:18, "For John had been saying to Herod."

- e) Acts 19:18, "Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices."
 - f) Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:2, etc., consistently translates *episkopos* as "overseer."
 - g) 1 Corinthians 7:15, "But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved."
 - (1) The definition of "enslaved" is "to make a slave of; reduce to bondage" (cf. Acts 7:6; Romans 6:18, 22; 1 Corinthians 9:19).
 - (2) The same type of argumentation can be seen in Acts 13:44-46.
 - h) 1 Peter 3:21, "Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."
4. Corrections needed.
- a) The ESV does not use italics (or brackets).
 - b) Matthew 19:9, "sexual immorality" (as the NKJV) is too general. Lust is a form of sexual immorality, but no justification for terminating a marriage.
 - c) Philippians 2:6, the translators follow the NASB in rendering the present participle "was."
 - d) Acts 2:27 transliterates "hades," but Matthew 16:18 renders same word "hell."
 - e) Romans 4:9, "as" should be "for."
 - f) Romans 10:10, the translators followed the NRSV, giving the impression that one is saved at the point of faith.
 - (1) If confession is required, then we are not saved by faith alone. Consider other passages in the chapter and elsewhere in Romans
 - (a) Submission (10:3).
 - (b) Calling (10:12-13).
 - (c) Obedience (10:16).
 - (d) Baptism (6:3-4).
 - (2) Faith in the Roman letter:
 - (a) 1:5; 16:26, obedience of faith.
 - (b) 1:8; 16:19, known everywhere.
 - (c) 11:20; 10:21, unbelief = disobedience.
 - (d) 10:16-17, faith = obedience.
 - (e) 4:11-12, active response to God.
 - (3) In Romans 10, Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30.
 - (a) In Deuteronomy 30:14, Moses speaks of the mouth and the heart; Paul shows the New Testament use.

(b) If Romans 10 states the entire plan of salvation, what happens to repentance?

g) Hebrews 6:4-6, the translators followed the KJV.

(1) The NRSV and NASB translated the phrase, "... and then have fallen away" while the ASV translated it, "... and then fell away."

(2) Wallace calls the conditional tradition of KJV, et al. unwarranted and offers the translation, "It is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, and have fallen away" (GGBB, 633).

G. The New International Version.

1. Twenty teams of five scholars each presented their work to subcommittees. Each of the men signed a statement of faith that the Bible is the word of God.

2. Some perversions:

a) Genesis 1:1-2 (footnote), gap theory implied (God created perfect world, possibly billions of years ago; Satan fell; earth was destroyed and became waste and void; re-creation).

(1) Contrast this with the standard versions. None of them even allow for this interpretation.

(2) Genesis 2:3, "all" was created within six days of chapter one (cf. Exodus 20:11; Mark 10:6; Romans 1:20; 5:12).

b) Exodus 10:19 (footnote), "Hebrew *Yam Suph*; that is, Sea of Reeds." Ibn Ezra, a Jewish commentator of 12th century suggested it was called the Reed Sea because reeds grew around it; Luther and others translated it as "Sea of Reeds." *Biblical Archaeology Review* (Vol. X, No. 4) makes the following arguments:

(1) Passages such as 1 Kings 9:26 cannot refer to anything except the Red Sea. The NIV translates all 26 occurrences as the "Red Sea."

(2) There are no reeds in Red Sea; papyrus does not grow in salty water.

(3) The supposed connection between *yam suph* and its Egyptian derivation will not stand under scrutiny. It refers to the sea at the end of the world.

c) Psalm 51:5, "Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me."

(1) Contrast the KJV, NKV, ASV and NASB. They do not say, "iniquity was shapen in me" or "my mother conceived sin in me" (cf. Ezekiel 18:4-20; 1 John 3:4).

(2) In Galatians 4:4, was Jesus a sinner from birth? Furthermore, what of babies who die in infancy?

- (3) Even if he had said, "I was born in sin," this would not necessarily mean he was born sinning (cf. Isaiah 7:15-16; Jonah 4:11). Infants are not accountable because they lack the capacity to know right from wrong.
- d) Jonah 3:3, the 1978 edition of NIV conveys idea that it took three days to walk through all the streets of Nineveh. The 1984 edition refers to three days' time being required in arriving, visiting and then departing.
- e) Matthew 24:34 (footnote), "race" reflects premillennial bias. *Genea* = sum total of those born at the same time, expanded to include all those living at a given time or in the same generation as contemporaries (cf. 12:41-42; 23:36).
- f) Luke 12:19-20, the Greek uses "soul" (*psuche*) three times in these two verses. It is often permissible to translate this "life." In the second occurrence, the NIV changes, "Soul, you have ..." to "You have plenty of good things ..."
- g) Acts 2:27, *haidēs* is translated "grave." In Matthew 11:23, it is translated "the depths."
- h) Romans 1:17, "a righteousness that is by faith from first to last" (cf. Galatians 2:16). Preaching righteousness by faith leads to (or unto) faith.
- i) Romans 4:3, "credited to him as righteousness." Abraham's faith was counted to him "unto" (in order to) righteousness, not "like" righteousness.
- j) Romans 5:14, "did not sin by breaking a command ..." Would that mean that no patriarch disobeyed a command of God?
- k) Romans 7:18 (and many others), "flesh" is translated "sinful nature." It is also translated as "sinful human nature" (2 Peter 2:18). *Sarx* occurs 151 times in New Testament.
- (1) KJV: 147 "flesh;" 2 "carnal;" 1 "carnally" (of the flesh); 1 "fleshly." Similar results are found in ASV and the NASB. The RSV uses "flesh" 106 times.
- (2) NIV: 37 "flesh;" 27 "sinful nature." The NIV uses 22 different English forms for other occurrences. Translators should just translate!
- l) Romans 10:10, "believe and are justified ... confess and are saved."
- m) 1 Corinthians 2:14, "the man without the Spirit" instead of "natural man."
- n) 1 Corinthians 13:10, "but when perfection comes ..."
- o) Ephesians 1:13, "you were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth."

p) James 5:4, changes "Lord of Sabaoth" (Lord of armies in heaven and on earth) to "Lord Almighty."

H. The Today's New International Version.

1. This is an update of the NIV published in 2005. In order to appeal to a younger audience, some masculine references are made gender-neutral. This has produced a "politically correct" version of the Bible.
 - a) The TNIV removes "he" over 1,090 times -- over 35% of the occurrences.
 - b) The TNIV removes "him" over 1,600 times -- a whopping 66% of the occurrences.
 - c) The TNIV removes "his" over 290 times -- over 20% of the occurrences.
2. Some perversions:
 - a) Genesis 1:27, "so God created human beings in his own image."
 - b) Matthew 10:24, "Students are not above their teacher, nor servants above their master."
 - c) Matthew 10:38, "Those who do not take up their cross and follow me are not worthy of me."
 - d) Matthew 12:30, "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters."
 - e) Mark 8:36-37, "What good is it for you to gain the whole world, yet forfeit your soul? Or what can you give in exchange for your soul?"
 - f) John 10:9, "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture."
 - g) Psalm 34:19, "The righteous may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers them from them all; He protects all their bones, not one of them will be broken." The change obscures its fulfillment in the crucifixion of Christ.
 - h) The same types of changes are found in Genesis 1:26; 5:2; Psalm 1:1; 8:4; Proverbs 5:21; Luke 17:3; John 6:44; 11:25; 14:23; Acts 20:30; 1 Corinthians 14:28; James 1:12; Revelation 3:20; Matthew 7:3; 1 Corinthians 15:21; Hebrews 2:17; Matthew 7:4; 15:5; Revelation 22:18.
 - i) In the *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, a 2002 article listed 901 examples of translation inaccuracies in the TNIV in the New Testament alone.

I. The Living Bible.

1. This is a paraphrase by Kenneth Taylor, 1971. Because of heavy criticism, it was revised and republished as the New Living Translation in 1996.

2. Some perversions:
 - a) Slang, Acts 23:3, "God will slap you, you painted pigpen!"
 - b) Curse words, John 9:34; 1 Samuel 20:30.
 - c) Calvinism, Psalm 51:5; Ephesians 2:3.
 - d) Direct operation of Holy Spirit, Romans 8:16, "for His Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts, and tells us that ..."
 - e) Faith alone, Romans 4:12; Ephesians 2:8, "even trusting is not of yourselves; it too is a gift from God."
 - f) Baptism, Romans 6:3, "we became Christians and were baptized."
 - g) Spiritual gifts, 1 Corinthians 13:10, "when we have been made perfect."
 - h) Premillennialism, 2 Timothy 4:1, "will set up his kingdom."
 3. The Book (1999) is a joint effort of Pat Robertson and Kenneth Taylor and uses the New Living Translation.
- J. The New World Translation.
1. This was first published around 1950. The impetus for this "version" is that the Jehovah's Witnesses wanted a Bible that taught their doctrines.
 2. Some perversions:
 - a) John 1:1, "a god." This interprets Christ as a created being.
 - b) Colossians 1:16-17, inserts "other" four times. Again, this interprets Christ as a created being.
 - c) 2 Peter 3:10, "discovered" instead of "burned up." This presents the idea of a rejuvenated earth.
 - (1) Cf. KJV; NKJV; ASV; NASB; Alford, Vine, Lenski, et. al. Thayer: "the strange but improbable reading of codices aleph, B, and other authorities."
 - (2) Even if "discovered" were correct, what would it mean in this context? Vss. 7-12 are teaching that the earth will be destroyed.
 - (3) This conclusion agrees with every other passage on the subject; cf. Hebrews 1:10-12 (perish = *apollumi*, as in Matthew 10:28 which Jehovah's Witnesses believe is annihilation); Matthew 24:35; Romans 2:12.

Conclusion. Read, study, meditate upon and obey the Bible. It is what can save us (James 1:21-25). Hopefully this will help you build greater faith in the word of God. If you have faith that the Bible is truly the word of God, then you are obligated to obey it (Luke 11:28).