

# Which Bible Translation?

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## INTRODUCTION

Many issues divide the Body of Christ today. Baptism, communion, pandemic healthcare, pre-tribulation rapture verses post-tribulation and more all frequently cause division in the Church. Satan loves to divide and conquer; it's sad we fight among ourselves instead of engaging the real enemy.

One of Satan's clear strategies from early in Genesis becomes casting doubt on God's word. Recall in the garden Satan's words "Has God really said?" confusing Eve and causing her to sin. Satan realizes casting doubt on what God actually says can be a winning strategy for him — what could cause more confusion than casting doubt the Bible in your lap isn't the exact Word of God?

This strategy continues today with the Bible translation debate. Is the King James really the best translation? What about ye Olde English? Shouldn't I use a newer translation? Many views exist, and unfortunately some people become rather militant. I've actually been told if you're witnessing to someone and they become saved, but you didn't use King James Version it didn't count. That's absurd.

However, in view of Satan's strategy of creating doubt in God's word the translation and preservation of the Bible becomes critically important; you can't dismiss the concept and use whatever translation you pick off the shelf. Balance is required; getting that balance requires effort on your part — you need to do some homework. Fortunately acquiring a basic familiarity with the issues can be done briefly, paying dividends in your Bible Study.

Anyone translating between languages quickly understands it's *impossible* to completely and accurately translate between languages. The translator must attempt different wording to convey the original idea; sometimes it's impossible to express the idea of one language in another. As such, the translation is *never* as good as the original; it's always a compromise of sorts and subject to the personal ideas of the translator (which is why we must understand the personal ideas of the translator).

The idea we can have a *perfect* translation is gone — they *all* have problems. Understanding which translations have which problems is important. In the following dis-

cussion we'll take a brief and summary look at issues affecting translation, and how those issues impact various translations. Understanding these issues is important to understand the advantages and disadvantages of the translation in your lap.

## ISSUES AFFECTING TRANSLATION

When considering Bible translation, many issues arise but for simplicity we'll stick to a few; these main issues concern you as a Christian trying to understand the Bible translation debate.

1. What you're translating *from*. Two main lines of Greek texts exist with differences between them. You also must consider if what we have today was handed down to us faithfully accurate to the originals.
2. *How* you translate what you've got. In other words, do you attempt to translate literally, or use more paraphrasing? Are cultural idioms considered?
3. *Bias* of the translator or committee. Some view their job as adjusting what the text says to fit current fads. As translations are updated over the years, the Bible text changes to current trends, even as the underlying Greek remains the same. Some translations retain the same name during those edits so unless you examine closely you might not notice, others use a year appended (NASB95) to be clear.

## Textual Issues

### Preservation of the Bible

Written 2,000 years ago, do we have correct and accurate copies of the original New Testament? A quick glance of the following chart\* illustrates the accuracy of the New Testament as it has been passed down to us, compared to other ancient writings.

\* Eastman and Missler "The Bible: An Extraterrestrial Message" page 10

Document	Date	Copies	% Purity
Homer's Iliad	800 BC	643	95
Herodotus	480 BC	8	?
Plato's Tetralogies	427 BC	7	?
Caesar's Gallic Wars	44 BC	10	?
New Testament	50-95 AD	25,366	99.5

If we don't accept the validity and accuracy of the Bible, we must throw out much more than the Bible. Do we doubt writings with considerably less sources? The existence of George Washington? With considerable manuscript evidence, the Bible stands apart from other ancient writings.

*Norman Geisler, a world renowned Bible scholar echoed this when he states: "Only 400 words of the NT are in doubt, whereas 764 lines of the Iliad are questioned. This five percent textual corruption (in the Iliad) compares with one-half of one percent of similar emendations in the New Testament"*<sup>\*</sup>

So the Bible has been preserved through the centuries for us as originally written; we can be confident our copies are very nearly perfect. Many differences exist in spelling or other minor issues only.

### Textual History

Two main lines of Greek texts exist, diverging in minor but important ways. The text used almost exclusively until the 1800's was Textus Receptus. However, manuscript discoveries in Alexandria changed some scholars' views.

In 1525, Erasmus compiled the first Greek text using texts from Byzantium, which had been in use previously for centuries, forming the basis for what would later be called Textus Receptus.<sup>†</sup> This is the main text the KJV translators used, although they likely had the other Alexandrian texts available (Codex Sinaiticus, etc). They obviously felt the Alexandrian text base (later to become Westcott-Hort) was unsuitable.

Scholars Westcott and Hort compiled a Greek New Testament starting in 1853 and finished 28 years later, relying heavily on the Alexandrian Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, changing the traditional Greek in over 8,000 places.<sup>‡</sup> We'll treat all these Alexandrian texts as similar and refer to them collectively as Westcott-Hort (not technically correct, but for our purposes it's close enough). How they edited the text, the reasons why and their background becomes critical to understanding the newer translations derived from Westcott-Hort's work.

The KJV and NKJV (and more recently the MEV) are the only modern translations using the Textus Receptus Greek text. All the others (NASB, NIV, etc) use the Westcott-Hort or Alexandrian texts. After studying these a bit, it becomes

apparent they've all been edited for theological reasons; the influence of early Gnostic heresy is unmistakable in Westcott-Hort's text.

For our purposes (even though it's not exact) we'll treat Textus-Receptus, Byzantium, and Majority Text as equivalent, and Westcott-Hort, Alexandrian, UBS, and Nestle-Aland as equivalent also.

### Gnostic Influence — Westcott and Hort

Early in church history a heretical group sprang up called the Gnostics, accepting the Greek idea of dualism between spirit and matter.<sup>§</sup> All matter in Gnostic teaching was evil; since all matter is evil, Jesus really didn't have a physical body and no physical resurrection occurred. The Gnostics also believed they had special knowledge, leading to spiritual elitism in the early church.

The Gnostic's teaching on the evilness of material leads to two errors. On one side was a form of asceticism — denying yourself is the path to heaven (the extreme puritanical view). On the other side, your body (since it is evil) doesn't matter. If you do drugs or party it really doesn't matter since your body is evil anyway.

The Gnostic heresy Jesus didn't have a body denies His death, physical resurrection, and thus His atonement for our sins. The apostle John wrote his first letter (1 John) in part to combat the Gnostic heresy. John writes he saw and handled Jesus — Jesus had a physical body. Even more, John warned anyone stating Jesus did not come *in the flesh* is not of God.

*Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.* 1 John 4:2-3

John's single statement debunks all Gnostic heresy. Why then is academia so enamored by it? Why would Westcott-Hort follow such heresy when it so obviously contradicts Biblical teaching? Why have we allowed people who obviously rejected Biblical teaching edit God's Word?

Westcott and Hort edited the original Greek as they compiled their edition, but as we shall see, both were heavily influenced by Gnostic philosophy. These Greek texts are usually footnoted in your Bible as "the oldest and best manuscripts." Yes, they're the oldest, but are they the best? Westcott and Hort had strange theological views — do we trust them with God's Word? Consider the words of Westcott and Hort themselves.

*But the book which has engaged me most is Darwin ... My feeling is strong that the theory is unanswerable.*<sup>¶</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> Eastman and Missler "The Bible: An Extraterrestrial Message" page 11-12

<sup>†</sup> Chuck Missler, "How we got our Bible", page 17

<sup>‡</sup> Chuck Missler, "How we got our Bible", page 18

<sup>§</sup> "Nelsons New Illustrated Bible Dictionary" page 500

<sup>¶</sup> F.J. Hort, *Life of Hort*, Vol I, page 416 (Chuck Missler, "How we got our Bible", page 19)

*No one now I suppose holds that the first three chapters of Genesis, for example, give a literal history—I could never understand how anyone reading them with open eyes could think they did.\**

*Christians are themselves in a true sense “Christs.” †*

*I am inclined to think that no such state as Eden (I mean the popular notion) ever existed, and that Adam’s fall in no degree differed from the fall of each of his descendants.‡*

These are their views. They’re entitled to them, of course, but do they agree with your Bible reading? In light of John’s warning about Gnostic heresy, can we trust these men to compile an accurate Greek text? As we’ll see in the examples, they allowed their un-orthodox views to influence their compilation of the Holy Scriptures — in some ways that simply make no sense.

A key issue is the integrated nature of the Bible; it’s designed to be used as a whole and complete message. As editing begins on verses, contradictions and other problems arise we’ll see in the examples section. No way exists for Westcott-Hort (or anyone else) to edit the Biblical text and keep it consistent.

## Translational Issues

Once a textual base is chosen (Textus Receptus or Westcott-Hort), you must decide exactly how to translate — literal or paraphrase? Both have pros and cons, but mostly you want to know where on the scale your translation is. If you’ve ever picked up a Greek-English interlinear, you know it can be difficult to read, as this example shows.

*so For loved God the world, so as the Son of Him, the Only-begotten, He gave, that everyone believing into Him not may perish, but have life everlasting.§*

The question isn’t quite literal vs. paraphrase, but how much paraphrasing does the translator do? A translator trying to remain literal will do the minimum required to put the sentence into grammatically correct English and no more, while a paraphrase tries to convey the *idea* of the original without using the exact wording of the original, perhaps taking into account cultural or other differences.

Weights and measures provide one simple example. How many people know what a cubit is? Or that 4 cubits make one fathom? Or 1 firkin is about 9 gallons? In a more literal translation, these quantities translate as-is, and it’s up to you to understand what they are. In more of a paraphrase translation, these appear in more modern measures. It’s easiest to show this issue with examples.

## Examples

### Literal vs Paraphrase

Examine 2 Timothy 2:15 in two translations and how the literal verses paraphrase problem presents itself.

\* *Life of Westcott*, Vol II, page 69 (Chuck Missler, “How we got our Bible”, page 19)

† B.F. Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John*, page 73 (Chuck Missler, “How we got our Bible”, page 19)

‡ F.J.A. Hort, *Life of Hort*, Vol I, page 78 (Chuck Missler, “How we got our Bible”, page 19)

§ John 3:16 *Interlinear Greek-English NT, 3rd Edition*, Jay P. Green

*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (KJV)*

“Rightly divide” in the Greek is *orthotomeo* (from *orthos*) — you might recognize as similar to the math term *orthogonal* which means a right angle. So the KJV is literal. But do you know what it means? If you have a math background you understand *orthogonal* as precise, an exact right angle. The KJV accurately and literally translates the Greek. Now consider the NIV.

*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth (NIV 1984)*

*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. (NIV 2011)*

“Correctly handles” is not literal, but for many people brings the truth of the verse out better. But notice instead of “Study” the NIV uses “Do your best” which completely changes the meaning and makes it less clear. Study implies dedication or devotion, while just doing your best can mean a lot less. John chapter seven provides another example.

*His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world.*

John 7:3–4 KJV

What you might miss is Jesus’ brothers picking on Him a little. Since they didn’t believe Jesus was God, they’re actually baiting Him to show His stuff. Now compare the New Living Translation.

*Jesus’ brothers urged him to go to Judea for the celebration. “Go where your followers can see your miracles!” they scoffed. “You can’t become a public figure if you hide like this! If you can do such wonderful things, prove it to the world!”*

John 7:3–4 NLT

In these two examples both the advantages and disadvantages of literal and paraphrase translation appear. Most often literal translation is superior, but sometimes referring to a paraphrase proves advantageous.

**Textual**

For these KJV and NKJV represent Textus Receptus, and the NIV (and also the NASB or the New American Standard Bible) represent Westcott-Hort. Most “modern” translations are influenced by Westcott-Hort, even if they don’t follow exactly the full changes Westcott-Hort made. Some translations include the changes as footnotes, others include in the main text.

*(Matthew 18:11 NKJV) For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.*

*(Matthew 18:11 KJV) For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.*

*(Matthew 18:11 NIV 1984/2011) deleted*

NIV deletes entirely, while NASB brackets it as probably not in original text. Why delete this verse? Perhaps if you believe (as Westcott) we’re all true Christs and don’t have need of salvation.

*(Matthew 25:13 NKJV) Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which **the Son of Man is coming**.*

*(Matthew 25:13 KJV) Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein **the Son of man cometh**.*

*(NLT\* 2018) So you, too, must keep watch! For you do not know the day or hour **of my return**.*

*(Matthew 25:13 NIV 1984/2011) Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.*

*(ESV† 2016) Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.*

*(NASB 2020) Be on the alert then, because you do not know the day nor the hour.*

*(LSB‡ 2021) Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know the day nor the hour.*

That’s a bizarre one. Why would I keep watch if I don’t know what time it was? But it’s not the time, it’s the time of Jesus’ return you don’t know. We are taught to always be on the lookout for Jesus’ return — it can come anytime.

*(Mark 2:17 NKJV) When Jesus heard it, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, **to repentance**.”*

*(Mark 2:17 KJV) When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners **to repentance**.*

*(Mark 2:17 NIV 1984/2011) On hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

*(ESV 2016) And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

Another fun one. Jesus didn’t come to call the righteous, but sinners. For what? An invitation to dinner? To Saturday’s football game?

*(Acts 8:37 NKJV) Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”*

*(Acts 8:37 KJV) And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*

*(Acts 8:37 NIV 1984/2011) deleted*

*(Acts 8:37 ESV) On biblegateway.com, returns “No Results Found.”*

If you didn’t believe Jesus was God, you certainly wouldn’t want it in your text so you delete it. NASB generally brackets as not in original text.

*(Ephesians 3:9 NKJV) and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things **through Jesus Christ**;*

*(Ephesians 3:9 KJV) And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things **by Jesus Christ**:*

*(Ephesians 3:9 NIV 1984/2011) and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.*

NIV has God creating all things, NOT Jesus — which you wouldn’t want to say if you accept Gnostic heresy. Here Westcott-Hort directly contradict Paul in Colossians 1:16–17 who attributes creation to Jesus. In Colossians 1:17, Paul even states Jesus holds the atoms of the universe together.

*(1 Peter 4:1 NKJV) Therefore, since Christ suffered **for us** in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,*

*(1 Peter 4:1 KJV) Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered **for us** in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;*

*(1 Peter 4:1 NIV 1984) Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.*

*(1 Peter 4:1 NIV 2011) Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin.*

\* New Living Translation

† English Standard Version

‡ Legacy Standard Bible

Jesus didn't just suffer, he suffered and died *for us*. Also note the NIV changed tenses between the 1984 and 2011 version, from past to present — “he who has suffered” versus “whoever suffers.”

*(Revelation 11:17 NKJV) saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.*

*(Revelation 11:17 KJV) Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.*

*(Revelation 11:17 NIV 1984/2011) saying: We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.*

*(Revelation 11:18 ESV 2016) saying, We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign.*

Denying the return of Jesus. In these few examples, you can see how Westcott-Hort personal theology (or lack thereof) influenced their compilation of the Greek text. Some changes contradict other areas of the Bible, while others make no sense at all. Since the Bible is inerrant, it must be Westcott-Hort making the mistakes.

### Editorial Changes

In the late 2000's a dangerous trend emerged: editing the text to suit various theological trends. Consider a few cases where the Greek agrees between Westcott-Hort and Majority text, but different “revisions” of a Bible change meaning between printings.

### Same Greek, missing words

*In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*  
2 Thessalonians 1:8 KJV

The KJV version is clear. Notice while controversy exists between Westcott-Hort and the Majority text, this is not an area of disagreement between them, as the various Greek sources appear almost identical\*

*ἐν πυρὶ φλογός, διδόντος ἐκδίκησιν τοῖς μὴ εἰδόσιν θεὸν καὶ τοῖς μὴ ὑπακούουσιν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ*  
Nestle 1904

*ἐν πυρὶ φλογός, διδόντος ἐκδίκησιν τοῖς μὴ εἰδόσι θεὸν καὶ τοῖς μὴ ὑπακούουσιν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ*  
Westcott and Hort 1881

*ἐν πυρὶ φλογός, διδόντος ἐκδίκησιν τοῖς μὴ εἰδόσι / εἰδόσιν θεὸν καὶ τοῖς μὴ ὑπακούουσιν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ*  
Westcott and Hort / [NA27 and UBS4 variants]

*ἐν πυρὶ φλογός, διδόντος ἐκδίκησιν τοῖς μὴ εἰδόσιν θεὸν, καὶ τοῖς μὴ ὑπακούουσιν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ*  
Byzantine Majority Text 2005

*ἐν πυρὶ φλογός διδόντος ἐκδίκησιν τοῖς μὴ εἰδόσιν θεὸν καὶ τοῖς μὴ ὑπακούουσιν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*  
Stephanus Textus Receptus 1550

The significant part ἐν πυρὶ φλογός, διδόντος ἐκδίκησιν agrees between the different sources, so it's not a typical Westcott-Hort vs Majority text issue. Placing the Greek into any online translator will return something like “in flame fire, giving vengeance” (Bing Translator). Yet how do some of the alphabet-soup translations handle this?

- KJV/NKJV/MEV In flaming fire taking vengeance
- NASB77/NASB95 dealing out retribution
- NASB2020 in flaming fire, dealing out retribution
- LSB (NASB 2021?) executing vengeance
- NIV 1984 They will be punished
- NIV 2011 He will punish those
- ESV in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance
- NLT in flaming fire, bringing judgment

Only the Majority Text translations (KJV, NKJV, and MEV) handle it correctly, even though the Greek matches between various Greek sources. Why? Only the editors know for sure, but it's reasonable to assume as translations are edited over time by different groups, their individual bias will differ, and thus various changes will appear in the text unsupported by the original Greek sources.

In this case, the phrase “in flaming fire” appears and disappears in various translations, and in the case of the various NASB editions, appears and disappears over time. When the Greek text agrees between the major camps, yet over time translators edit the English text, something fishy exists within those groups.

**Editorial Bias** In this case the NIV between 1984 and 2011 changed a passage.† Greek Texts again from Bible-Hub:‡

*διδάσκειν δὲ γυναικὶ οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω, οὐδὲ ἀθηντεῖν ἀνδρός, ἀλλ' εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ.*  
Westcott and Hort 1881

*γυναικὶ δὲ διδάσκειν οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω, οὐδὲ ἀθηντεῖν ἀνδρός, ἀλλ' εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ.*  
Scrivener's Textus Receptus 1894

\* Greek texts from [https://biblehub.com/text/2\\_thessalonians/1-8.htm](https://biblehub.com/text/2_thessalonians/1-8.htm)

† They're far from the only translation suffering this problem, as already noted the NASB suffers the same issue.

‡ Greek from [https://biblehub.com/text/1\\_timothy/2-12.htm](https://biblehub.com/text/1_timothy/2-12.htm)

For the moment, ignore the controversy on the following passage as it's simply not important to the discussion. The issue is translation committees often say the new version is meant to improve unclear areas. Begin with the 1984 NIV compared to the NKJV.

*And I do not permit a woman to teach or to **have** authority over a man, but to be in silence.* 1 Timothy 2:12 NKJV

*I do not permit a woman to teach or to **have** authority over a man; she must be silent.* 1 Timothy 2:12 NIV 1984

That might be a controversial verse, but it is clear. The editors of the 2011 NIV couldn't leave it alone; making a change in the 2011 version, once again where the Greek sources basically agree.

*I do not permit a woman to teach or to **assume** authority over a man; she must be quiet.* NIV 2011

The 2011 NIV has been edited. Why? Only the committee knows, but if you've followed trends in the church it's become fashionable and trendy for women to take senior leadership positions (again, ignore if you do . . . or do not . . . agree with that). It's obvious the 1984 version would be in conflict with that trend, so the 2011 NIV softens the text.

Obviously "have" holds different meaning than "assume." The first eliminates the possibility, while the second allows for it, as long as it's not their idea (proponents of new ideas would likely say that's not far enough, but likely the next revision of the NIV might make them happy if the committee continues that way).

Did the Greek change? It appears (without knowing what the committee thought) the change was made simply to bend the Bible toward trendy modern ideas.

Is that what you want in your Bible? More important, *should* the Bible be edited to match changes in society? We've seen articles noting it's possible to match your theology to the Bible translation — if you hold this position take that version, but if you hold another position take this version. That's exactly backwards — the Bible needs to be translated as much as possible without current societal bias infecting the translation.

## KING JAMES VERSION

### King James Only

Some claim the KJV as the only true Bible, claiming the translators of the KJV were divinely inspired just as Peter, Paul and John were, placing it on the same level as the original Greek. Unfortunately, no basis for this exists as anyone who has ever translated anything soon finds, it's *impossible* to accurately translate one language to another. Even worse, Greek is one of the most rich languages, with English one of the worst.

Dad tells me a story of someone who was KJV-Only and said when he finished reading another translation, he

tossed it on the coffee table. But when he finished reading the KJV, he reverently and gently placed it back from whence it came. That's idolatry.

We could continue to debate the KJV-only crowd, but I think most people don't hold such a view, and as such it isn't worth the time to continue the discussion. Just be aware some people hold this view, and from time to time you will encounter them.

The KJV is definitely a good (best) translation, although it's not the only translation that has use.

### Olde English

Some would throw away the KJV due to it's old English. Certainly that *can* be a valid reason, but shouldn't preclude your use of it. Just as when studying any subject (Math), certain terminology must be learned. The KJV is no different. Remember you're reading text 2,000 years old from a different culture — it's going to be different.

The first problem pops up with archaic words. Dictionaries exist if you need help (Webster's 1913 edition is freely available online), but you'll quickly become accustomed to the vocabulary. The bigger issue is words you *think* you know, but changed meaning over time. These present a real problem, and unless you're aware of them you'll definitely encounter problems with the KJV.

*For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.*

1 Thessalonians 4:15 KJV

Any new translation will translate "prevent" as "precede." The word prevent changed meaning between 1611 and now. If you didn't know this verse makes no sense.

*prevent* — 1. to go before; to precede. 2. To precede 3. To go before; to precede; to favor by anticipation or by hindering distress or evil.

Websters 1828 dictionary

*Prevent* 1. To go before; to precede; hence, to go before as a guide; to direct. [1913 Webster] We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. — 1 Thess. iv. 15.

Collaborative International Dictionary of English v.0.48 [gcide]

Recent translations generally handle 1 Thessalonians 4:15 correctly. The KJV is not mis-translated, "prevent" meant pre-event or preceded when the KJV was completed; using a dictionary from the period explains the difference.

*For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.*

2 Thessalonians 2:7 KJV

"Let" has changed meaning to "hinder." Again, any recent translation will correctly translate this verse (both of these verses are changed in the NKJV as well). "Let" is also used in tennis, as in hinder, matching the older definition.

\* <https://www.usta.com/en/home/improve/tips-and-instruction/national/tennis-serving-rules.html> accessed Sep 2023

If you serve a ball that hits the top of the net before bouncing into the correct service box, it is called a let. You may take that serve again.\*

The other point people have with old English stems from “thees” and “thous” in the KJV. However, a reason does exist for these in the text; it’s to differentiate singular and plural. Consider the following chart:†

	Nominative	Objective	Possessive
1st Singular	I	Me	My
1st Plural	We	Us	Our
2nd Singular	Thou	Thee	Thy
2nd Plural	Ye	You	Your
3rd Singular	He	Him	His
3rd Plural	They	Them	Their

A few additional notes on the Shakespearean uses of ye Olde English.‡

*The word thou is a second-person singular pronoun in English. . . . Thou is the nominative form; the oblique/objective form is thee (functioning as both accusative and dative); the possessive is thy (adjective) or thine (as an adjective before a vowel or as a possessive pronoun); and the reflexive is thyself.§*

It surprises some to learn the KJV translators didn’t use thee-thou-thine Shakespearean to be more “holy.” Rather it was to differentiate singular and plural.

*The translators of the King James Version of the Bible (begun 1604 and published 1611, while Shakespeare was at the height of his popularity) had a particular reason for keeping the informal “thou/thee/thy/thine” forms that were slowly beginning to fall out of spoken use, as it enabled them to match the Hebrew and Ancient Greek distinction between second person singular (“thou”) and plural (“ye”). It was not to denote reverence (in the King James Version, God addresses individual people and even Satan as “thou”) but only to denote the singular.¶*

Why is this important? Consider Luke 22:31–32.

*And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*

Luke 22:31–32 KJV

Here you can easily see Satan asked for much more than Peter — perhaps the entire group! However, Jesus prays for Peter *himself*. This distinction is easily missed in other translations (including NKJV).

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## COMPARISON OF TRANSLATIONS

So how do we rate the various translations? The following chart provides a guide for modern translations, showing which textual base they follow and a rough guide of how literally they translate the original Greek.

Translation	Text Base	Literal Scale
KJV	TR	1
NKJV	TR	1
NASB	WH	1-2
NIV	WH	4
NLT	WH	6
The Message	?	9

Literal scale goes from 0 as a perfect literal (much like a Greek-English interlinear) to 10 which is a complete paraphrase — the translator reads a paragraph and translates it without trying to be literal.

It’s important to know just because the newer translations are marked as Westcott-Hort does not necessarily imply they follow *all* of Westcott-Hort. Each translation has different ways of handling it. Some footnote, some delete, some ignore Westcott-Hort changes in some areas.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Use the King James or New King James for primary use, study and reading as it comes from the preferred Textus Receptus Greek Text. However, referring to a New Living Paraphrase in some cases will assist with meaning. These two translations provide a solid foundation for Bible Study.

Most importantly, understand *all* translations have problems. It’s important to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the Bible translation you use. In the event you’re using another translation, it does *not* mean to throw it out or stop using it. Several people I have considerable respect for use something besides KJV/NKJV.

## CONCLUSION

You must have balance — no translation is 100% perfect, they all have problems. This does not mean the Bible has errors or inconsistencies, just that translation is imperfect. It’s important to understand how your translation came to be, and what methods were used in its creation. Most importantly, you are encouraged to study on your own.

† <https://av1611.com/kjbp/articles/bacon-theethou.html>

‡ Wikipedia has both its flaws, and uses. Many times if a subject isn’t overly political or controversial, what it contains isn’t too bad.

§ <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thee> accessed September 2023

¶ [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early\\_Modern\\_English](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Modern_English) accessed September 2023