

# Inaccuracies in Translations

Revelation 22:18-19

Introduction: I have heard preachers state from the pulpit that there is nothing in our translations that are so inaccurate that a person could lose their soul. I have even made the same false statement myself. As we will learn from this lesson, there are inaccuracies in translations that can jeopardize a person's soul.

## I. The most blatant example is the translated word "baptism."

A. The word baptism is a created English word for the Greek word that means immersion. The transliterated English word "baptism" was created by a Catholic Priest by the name of John Wycliffe. Wycliffe translated the first English Bible in 1382. When he came to the word immersion, he recognized a problem. The Catholic Church practiced sprinkling, not immersion. Cleverly, he transliterated the Greek word "baptisma" into a new English word (never known in English before) as "baptism."

B. The creation of a new word in English gives the creator the right to define the new word. Hence, the word baptism in our English dictionaries includes dipping, sprinkling, pouring or washing. However, the Greek word for immersion does not allow for alternate definitions. If Wycliffe had honestly translated the word, there would be no such word as baptism in English. As a result, people are losing their souls thinking they are being saved via baptism when immersion is required (Mk. 16:16; etc.).

C. Unfortunately, the word baptism is so commonplace, that we often use the inaccurate word to the exclusion of the requirement to be immersed for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). The word baptism is a blatant addition to God's word (Rev. 22:18-19). If this English word is not explained appropriately, it will jeopardize a person's soul if immersion is not employed!

## II. The problem in translations.

A. Since there is one inaccuracy in the English translations, how many more errors are there that could jeopardize our souls?

B. When the earliest translations into English were written, secular and worldly men had their way without God's oversight. Accuracy in translation was often sacrificed for more palatable words. The King James translation, for which we derive many of our modern-day translations, has many alterations from the original Greek. The translators were more interested in producing a version that everyone would accept than in producing a consistent rendering of the Bible.

C. By their own admission, "They said they did not think it right to honor some words by giving them a place forever in the Bible, while they virtually said

to other equally good words: Get ye hence and be banished forever. They quote a “certain great philosopher” who said that those logs were happy which became images and were worshipped, while, other logs as good as they were laid behind the fire to be burned. So they sought to use as many English words, familiar in speech and commonly understood, as they might, lest they should impoverish the language, and so lose out of use good words.” (McAfee, “The Making of the King James Version; Its Characteristics,” [www.bible-researcher.com](http://www.bible-researcher.com)).

D. The King James translators choose inconsistency in favor of having a diversity of word choice. The result was a version that is not always accurate. Therefore, great care must be exercised when looking at the words used to represent the original language.

### III. The motivation for inaccuracy.

A. Inaccuracy was introduced into the Bible because the translators had itching ears (2 Tim. 4:3-4). They were afraid of the political and religious ramifications had they been honest. They were practicing error when they discovered the truth. Unfortunately, they choose to hide the truth.

B. As a rule, translators won't transliterate a word unless there is no equivalent word to use in the language they are translating. However, in English there is an equivalent word for the Greek word “baptisma.” So why would a translator not use the equivalent word? It certainly doesn't reflect honesty. Rather it indicates a desire to hide the truth.

### IV. The word wine illustrates dishonesty in translation.

A. There are at least 13 different Hebrew and Greek words that have been translated into one English word. Surely, the English language is not so limited that the translators couldn't differentiate 13 different words. This is not acceptable especially sense the KJV translators said they did not what to honor one word over many others. Yet, when it comes to the word wine, that is exactly what they did though they said the opposite.

B. A lack of consistency in translation in favor of a diversity in word choice is not acceptable when we find a lack of word choice in favor of inconsistency. We find in truth, dishonesty in favor of inconsistency in translation.

C. For example, the Greek word “nepho” means “drink no wine” or “do not drink.” Yet the English word “sober” was chosen to represent this word (1 Pet. 5:8). Further in this same verse, the Greek word “katesthio” more accurately means swallow rather than devour. In context, Peter is condemning the drinking of alcohol but we get a more general application to watch out for Satan in the translation.

D. Would it surprise you to know that King James was an alcoholic, the head of the Church of England who originally commissioned the King James Version of the Bible? Was there a motivation not to offend the king?

E. The intentional mistranslations concerning the subject of wine in most English versions of the Bible has caused many to believe that a moderate amount of alcohol is acceptable. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The inaccuracies in translation concerning the English word wine have jeopardized many souls!

V. Deception in translations.

A. The Lord has warned us to be on guard against such deception (Eph. 4:14)! Have we fallen prey to their cunning craftiness by the sleight use of words?

B. We are warned not to be deceived by words (Eph. 5:6). Jesus said, “*Take heed that no one deceives you*” (Matt. 24:4).

Conclusion: This lesson is not intended to undermine your confidence in God’s word. Rather, be wise in your handling of God’s word, “*rightly dividing the word of truth*” (2 Tim. 2:15). It is sad when inaccurate translations could jeopardize our souls. Maybe they should if we are not willing to diligently study God’s word.