

Which Translation Should I Use?

Part II

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Introduction: The most important consideration when selecting a Bible translation is accuracy. The Bible is not open to private interpretation (1 Pet. 1:20). God gave very specific warnings to anyone who would change the words contained therein (Deut. 4:2; 1 Cor. 4:6; Gal. 1:8-9; Rev. 22:18-19). However, that has not stopped translators from changing words to alter their meaning that reflects their personal beliefs, biases, and false teachings. Each translation must be examined for its accuracy.

I. American Standard Version

A. History: Originally commissioned by the Church of England in 1881, it was first published as The English Revised Version. A few years later, the units of measure were changed and republished as the American Standard Version in 1901. One hundred and one scholars from various denominations revised the KJV using the latest known Greek manuscripts and written in paragraph form.

B. Strengths:

1. The translators were all known and believed in the verbal inspiration of the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16).
2. An effort to translate the same Greek word with the same English word was attempted throughout.
3. Corrected many mistranslated passages in the KJV (Matt. 17:25; Acts 21:15; 28:13; Rom. 1:13; Phil. 4:6; 1 Tim. 5:4).
 - a. “Baggage” for “carriages” in Acts 21:15.
 - b. “In nothing be anxious” for “be careful for nothing” in Phil. 4:6.
 - c. “Grandchildren” for “nephews” in 1 Tim. 5:4.
4. Overall, most people believe it excels the KJV in accuracy.

C. Weaknesses:

1. Retains the Elizabethan language (“thee,” “thou” and “ye”).
2. Consistently uses “Jehovah” for the Hebrew word YHWH. We now know that Jehovah comes from the mispronunciation of YHWH.
3. It excludes two verses (John 5:4; Acts 8:37).
4. It totally rearranged the wording in 1 John 5:7.
5. It created mistranslated verses (Acts 17:3).
6. Charles H. Spurgeon spoke of it as “strong in Greek, weak in English.”
7. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls after its publication has made this translation obsolete.

II. New American Standard Version

A. History: Published by the Lockman Foundation in 1963 (N.T.) and 1971 (O.T.), 58 translators produced this translation. Their aim was to preserve the pattern of the American Standard Version. However, it is not a modernized version of the ASV though it is considered a revision of the same.

B. Strengths:

1. Eliminated most of the out-of-date language found in the ASV.
2. It is more consistent in its translation of words.
3. It consistently uses italics for inserted words.
4. It notes Old Testament words found in the New Testament by printing them in uppercase letters.

C. Weaknesses:

1. The names of the translators were withheld by the publisher making any investigation into their attitude toward scriptures unknown.
2. It uses “thee” and “thou” when referring to God. This implies a distinction when addressing God that does not exist.
3. Lacks precision in the details. For example, ...
 - a. “Late on the Sabbath” for “after the Sabbath” in Matt. 28:1.
 - b. “Destroy” for “Abolish” in Matt. 5:17 which directly conflicts with Christ’s statement in Eph. 2:15.
 - c. “As” for “for” in Rom. 4:3 making Abraham’s righteousness equivalent or already done.
4. Seems heavily influenced by the Revised Standard Version that was published in the mid 1900’s. That translation is known for the liberty it took to change words, many of which are inappropriate.

Conclusion: It seems the more translators try to improve wording, they unwittingly also corrupt passages. There is no one translation that is perfect. Each has flaws that make them undesirable. Therefore, we must be aware of the problems and seek to use the most accurate wording possible (2 Tim. 2:15).