

# Which Translation Should I Use?

Rev. 22:18-19

Introduction: Which translation is best of all? There are at least 128 different translations of the Bible on the market today. The KJV is probably the most popular version ever printed. The NIV is heavily marketed but it is a paraphrased version. There are even “politically correct” versions available that are gender-neutral. How should we go about selecting a Bible translation?

I. The most important consideration is **accuracy**.

A. All scripture is inspired of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Inspiration means that God gave us every word of the Bible.

B. God has commanded us to abide in His word (1 Cor. 4:6; Rev. 22:18-19).

C. Any attempt to change His words will only bring condemnation (Gal. 1:8-9; Rev. 22:18-19).

D. Alterations will prevent us from knowing the things of God (1 Cor. 2:9-13). No person knows the Spirit of God! Only the Spirit of God can reveal the things of God (1 Pet. 1:12).

E. The substitution of words or phrases in the Bible means the translators believe the words selected can be altered. When a translator substitutes words, they interject their personal beliefs and biases not to mention a false rendering of God’s words.

F. Therefore, each translation would have to be examined for its accuracy. Since people do the translating, how many completely accurate translations are there? So we must endeavor to find and use the most accurate translations available.

G. We do not have the time to examine over 128 different translations so we will examine just a few.

II. The King James Version

A. History: King James of England commissioned this translation that was completed in 1611. Fifty four scholars translated this version of which 6 died before its completion. Since 1611, it has gone through 9 revisions. The current version is the 1769 revision of the text.

B. Strengths:

- Multiple translators
- We know the men who did the translation and know of their less than stellar attitude toward the inspiration of the Bible.
- Written in the best English of that time.

### C. Weaknesses:

- All the translators were members of the Church of England. The translation was funded by the Church of England and King James was the head of that church. As a result...
  - “Passover” was translated “easter” in Acts 12:4. This Greek word (pascha) was translated correctly everywhere else in this translation. Why would they make this exception? It wouldn’t be that the Church of England celebrated a religious holiday they called Easter?
  - The Greek word “baptizo” was transliterated as “baptism” throughout the translation. “Baptizo” properly translated would be “immersion.” However, the Church of England practiced sprinkling. In order to stay true to their practices while being “honest” with the text, they created a new English word.
- There was no independent review of the final proof. As a result...
  - Noah (Heb. 11:7) is also Noe (Matt. 24:37). [Bef. 1988]
  - Jeremiah is also Jeremias (Matt. 16:14).
- A composite text (Textus Receptus) of only three manuscripts was used. Ideally, the same Hebrew or Greek word would be rendered the same in English when used in a similar manner. However...
  - Reprobate (Rom. 1:28), castaway (1 Cor. 9:27) and rejected (Heb. 6:8) are all from the same Greek word (adokimos).
  - Stewardship (Lk. 16:2-4) and dispensation (1 Cor. 9:17) are from the same Greek word (oikonomia).
  - Take (Matt. 18:23) and reckon (Matt. 18:24) are from the same Greek word (sunairo).
  - Reasoned (Mk. 11:31), numbered (Mk. 15:28), despised (Acts 19:27), thinkest (Rom. 2:3), counted (Rom. 2:6), conclude (Rom. 3:8), imputed (Rom. 4:6), reckon (Rom. 6:11), esteemeth (Rom. 14:14), suppose (2 Cor. 11:5) and charge (2 Tim. 4:16) are all from the same Greek word (logizomia).
  - Some sections of Song of Solomon and in the minor prophets were not translated well making them hard to read.
- The English language has changed. As a result...
  - “Let” no longer has two meanings as it did in 1611. It meant to permit or to hinder. The Greek word for “let” is translated “witholdeth” and “letteth to let” in 2 Thess. 2:6-7.

- People have used Matt. 6:34 to argue against buying insurance based on the phrase “take therefore no thought for the morrow.” However, “take thought” was the old way of saying “be anxious.”
- We no longer use words like “thee,” “thou,” and “ye.”
- The translators were not consistent in identifying added words for the sake of grammar by the use of italics.
- The translators were misguided by their beliefs and political bias. For example, the Greek word for “do not drink” was translated, “be sober” (1 Pet. 5:8) because King James who commissioned the translation was a raging alcoholic and the head of the Church of England.

### III. New King James Version

A. History: It is the updated version of the King James Version which was first published in 1982. The translators were heavily Baptists.

#### B. Strengths:

- It removed the Elizabethan language.
- It italicized all inserted words.
- It provides footnotes when it deviates from other manuscripts.

#### C. Weaknesses:

- It retains many of the inconsistent word translations as noted earlier.
- Section headings have been influenced by Premillennialists.
  - The title over Matt. 24:15 reads, “The Great Tribulation.”
  - Rev. 20:11 is titled, “The Great White Throne Judgment.”
- It uses the older English grammar with modern words. Some people find this irritating.
- It follows the trend in other translations of replacing the word “fornication” with “sexual immorality” (ex. Matt. 19:9). This can be too vague in many contexts.

Conclusion: We can certainly appreciate the need to give diligent study to God’s word (2 Tim. 2:15). It is not unusual for people to be misled by translations.