

Is the King James Version the Best Translation?

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Dear Friends:

I made a comment in the February 2008, *Wake Up Report*, "[Did Jesus Claim to be God?](#)" that the NIV (New International Version) translation of the Bible was my favorite study Bible. That comment has prompted several letters from people who are concerned that I am using a defective and errant translation of the Bible. Since I do not have time to address each letter individually, I thought a short response might be helpful.

First, if you are acquainted with my work over the past 30+ years, you know that I treasure the Bible. I believe the Bible is a means to an end and that end is the TRUTH about God. I have found that God's TRUTH is so huge that it goes beyond human comprehension. Of course, there are essential truths which most people grasp, but I am speaking here about ETERNAL truths. God does not favor the English language above other languages. None (that's zero) of the original manuscripts that make up the Bible were written in English. This means the KJV (King James Version) cannot be more accurate than the Santa Biblica (a Spanish translation), or for that matter, any of the other 1,000 languages into which the Bible has been translated. I know some people argue that the manuscripts used by the KJV translators were better than those used today, but that is not true

I have two objections with the *foolish presupposition* that the KJV is somehow a superior translation of the Bible. There are people whose teachings have created a context of fear and rejection by "proving" to people, who know nothing about the development of the Bible that certain verses and phrases in other translations, like the NIV, "are missing" or deleted. To me, this is nothing more than *trickery* and in order for it to work, there has to be *ignorance* and the *assumption* that (a) the KJV is perfect and unimpeachable, and (b) there's an evil conspiracy going around diluting and diminishing the Word of God. The outcome of this *trickery* is a lie that states that the KJV is the only version of the Bible that can be trusted.

For what it's worth, the so-called "authorized" version (KJV) was not authorized by King James or his government. King James gave translators permission to proceed with an English translation of the Bible, but he did not put "a stamp of approval" on their work. Even if King James had authorized the translation, who do you want to worship? Who has the omnipotence and omniscience to declare a 17th century English translation of the Bible to be THE only correct and final version of the Bible? If this were the case, where does that leave other translations, like Latin? If you insist that there must be an authorized version for the English language, then what about this one: The Douay-Rheims version? Catholics believe the pope has divine authority that came through Peter and his successors when Jesus gave the keys of the kingdom to Peter. (Matthew 16:19) The pope has *authorized* the Douay-Rheims version and it is based on the fourth century work of the scholar, Jerome. Jerome's Latin Vulgate is a very early work, so it is far more valuable than the 17th century translation in terms of antiquity. So the bottom line is this: Do you want a Bible having the approval of some man or do you want a Bible based

on the best manuscripts?

The KJV translators hoped to have one English Bible for all English speaking Christians in Europe. They wanted but did not receive a statement of *superiority* so that all Protestants could “be on the same theological page.” The translators did not want to see Protestantism fragment into denominations – people breaking away from the core of the reformation. The translators wanted Protestantism to remain one body, united against the Church of Rome. The KJV translation was not tested, verified, or seriously reviewed by students of Hebrew and Greek until many years after its translation. You may be surprised to learn that the KJV has had to undergo more than 500 changes since it was first printed and many grammatical errors remain in the KJV to this day. This is why translators published the “new” KJV to clear up these mistakes. I am not diminishing the KJV. As I wrote in the *Wake Up Report*, the KJV is one of my favorite translations, but the fact remains, I do not worship the Bible.

History shows that English speaking Christians used the KJV version of the Bible for about 200 years because it was the first one to be mass produced before the French Revolution (1613-1793). During this period, Protestantism fragmented into four or five opposing schools of theological thought. This was the very thing the KJV translators wanted to avoid, but it could not be stopped, even with everyone having the same English Bible! This proves that if there was only one true Bible in the world, there would still be variation among Christians about the content of TRUTH! There are over 200 different Christian denominations today! Just because a person owns a KJV, this does not ensure that person will find the TRUTH. How ironic is this? Isn't getting to the TRUTH the reason for owning a Bible?

TRUTH is revealed to man through a combination of what has been revealed (in the Bible) and the work of the Holy Spirit. John 16:13 says, “**But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.**” It is not a version of the Bible that leads to TRUTH, it is the Holy Spirit. A truth-seeker considers several Bible translations and the power of the Holy Spirit leads him into TRUTH. All translations are a means to an end and that end is TRUTH. A person who reads the Santa Biblica can reach an understanding of truth just as certainly as a person reading the KJV or the NIV. My library contains several translations of the Bible. I treasure them all. After studying Greek in college and making straight A's in it, and after translating sizeable portions of the New Testament, I can appreciate the daunting task of translating the Bible. Words are imperfect vehicles of communication, yet it is the medium through which we must communicate. People who have studied languages and those who have grown up in bilingual settings understand the dilemma of conveying ideas back and forth between languages.

It seems foolish to me that people quibble over translations when there are many manuscripts and fragments available from which to compare Bible verses. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls did not change the substance of the Bible, although those ancient manuscripts are not identical to the KJV. Given my research on the topic of translation, I do not hesitate to say that I find the 1984 version of the NIV to be one of the best translations available today. First, it was translated by one hundred people who differed in their religious backgrounds. This was purposely done to prevent as much human bias from entering the translation as possible.

Second, translators of the NIV had access to thousands of manuscripts and fragments which KJV translators did not have available at the time it was published. And finally, in addition to all this, today's knowledge of ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek is far more comprehensive than it was in earlier times. The KJV has been around since 1611 and a thousand translations have occurred since then. Even with a translation as plain and clear as the NIV, millions of people are still in darkness. So, this fuss is just a foolish one the devil uses to keep Christians divided in a meaningless argument.

I often tell people who complain at my seminars that I am not using the KJV that they should go find someone who does. I say, "If the KJV is such a superior Bible, where are the KJV people who are preaching and teaching present truth?" I have not found *one* yet. Even more, how can any person today explain present truth in crystal clear terms using 17th century English? It will be interesting to see if the 144,000 located all over the world use only the KJV. Do you really think that God's servants will be speaking to everyone on Earth in English and reading from an English KJV? No! The 144,000 will be speaking in their own native languages and reading from their own translations of the Bible. By the way, that's what the Second Seal in Revelation 6 was all about.

I hope this helps!

Best regards,

Larry Wilson

P.S.: "Eternal truth is not what I believe. Truth is greater than me. Truth is not even what I know for truth is larger than anything I know. Truth is fact. I may not believe it. I may not know it. But, that does not change it. It is there nevertheless, waiting to be discovered and believed. Truth does not depend upon the unsettled and changing opinions of men. It was there before it was believed and it remains truth whether it is believed or not. Truth is true. Reason does not originate it nor create it, it merely discovers it. Consequently, reason is not its source. Truth goes back beyond the beginning of reason. Some would have us believe that the church is the source of truth, particularly in matters of theology. They are wrong. The church is the product of truth. It does not originate it. The church came into being by accepting divine revelation. The church is not the source of that revelation. Truth goes beyond the church, it is antecedent to it. Truth, eternal truth." (Carlyle B. Haynes (1882-1958), *When a Man Dies*, p.4)