

"That's Not What My Bible Says!!!"

Introduction:

Often when we are engaged in studies with other people, we try to point out a teaching from the Word. This is what we are supposed to do; prove our doctrine is taken directly from the Word of God. Usually this is rather simple to do, but not always.

One frequent problem is making a point from one translation which is based on the particular translation's wording of the text. That is when the statement "that's NOT what my Bible says!" usually comes up.

Sadly, many of the versions read so differently from each other, that often very important principles are "lost in the translation". But, how can we teach key doctrines when our Bible's don't agree with each other?

This is a serious problem! It becomes one because we constantly seem to run into this situation if we don't all use the same translation, that is the problem that I want to address (not solve completely, it is far too controversial a subject to ever hope to do that).

Why are there different Translations?

We must remember that the language we use is not the original tongue of the writers of the Bible. We have to understand this when we compare versions.

There are ways to try to "back-up" what the particular text is saying, through the use of lexicons etc. Strong's Lexicon is the most popular one (best known).

There are of course other lexicons available, but essentially they do the same thing; help to understand the actual Hebrew or Greek language used by the writers of the Bible, and give a definition of the original words. Most also show variations of the word, the other places in Scripture where it is used, etc.

Unfortunately, the disputes begin at this point as to how accurate the "original text" is that the various Bible translators used; and if that text was copied down properly by the "scribe" who copied it. The original language texts that these various Bible versions are based on come from copies, the originals being lost to us.

The King James translator's used one set of text, the best available to them at the time. Later on, other texts have been found on which the more modern translations have been based.

This has led to many disputes, each side proclaiming the accuracy of their copy of the original to be superior to the other sides chosen text.

Ultimately, even the definitions given in the various lexicons can be argued, after all a word in Hebrew or Greek often could be translated accurately with many different English words. So we end up with arguments over EVERY aspect of trying to verify the texts we use.

What should we do about this problem?

This is a VERY controversial topic, which I must confess must be ultimately decided by men with much more ability than I shall ever possess.

But what we all DO have to understand (because it crops up when we try to discuss Scripture with other people, while not using the same translation), is that there is a valid argument for using the BEST AVAILABLE translation we can possibly find. The problem is trying to weigh through all of the minefields on the way to establishing that.

What I recommend is this:

- a. RESEARCH for yourself a little of both sides of the argument, don't just assume that the translators of your chosen version were the best at what they do.
- b. REMEMBER, the PERSONAL BELIEF'S of these persons often affect the way they translate VERY important sections of Scripture.

Let me also say this: I have a personal preference for the King James, and of course I believe it to be a very accurate translation (not perfect, but very good). But, I know there are those who do not like the King James because of the archaic language used. This is understandable. Not very many of us use this type of English on a daily basis, do we? I personally find the language beautiful, and have become accustomed to the phrasing and such, but it has a definite "learning curve".

I used to use the NIV exclusively, until I lost "faith" in the translators based on their overriding emphasis on what I felt were unsound doctrinal beliefs. I felt that this allowed them to "word things" to emphasize their viewpoints, and obscure the actual meaning of the text subtly.

I must stress that this is opinion on my part, they would argue that they used many different measures to ensure that personal bias was not allowed to affect the end product (I would argue the need they have found to periodically "update" their translation, adding back in verses they originally left out, or placing them in italics, or adding footnotes).

These types of modifications are troubling to me.

It seems that they are on the one hand claiming superior accuracy, while on the other hand quietly putting back what they originally left out, and continually modifying the text.

The KJV has been updated from time to time as well, but that has been to bring the English up to date (a lot of words have changed in the last 400 years).

The other problem I have with not just the NIV, but many of the other modern translations, is that they tend to protect their text from free use. That means that people must buy the Bible to read it in most cases.

Because of copyrights and such, a competing version must CHANGE their translation just enough to avoid copyright infringement and consequently being sued. That, to me at least, can definitely affect the way they translate a verse!

Just think, if you had to repeat everything a particular person tells you accurately, but at the same time are prohibited from using their same words, how difficult it would become to relay their original messages. What they actually said could become mistaken by the hearers because the message has been subtly changed before they heard it.

But this is what the writers of a new Bible translation are required to do, THEY HAVE TO ALTER THE TEXT if someone else has already worded it properly! They absolutely cannot use the same phrases...this is one of the major problems with any translation written today.

I have no idea what the personal beliefs of the person who wrote the following test actually are. But, I do think it helps us to see that there is a major difference between what the King James Version, and the New International Version of the Bible have to say on SOME of the teachings of Scripture.

Use the results to help you see that there is a need to study this topic more carefully.

This is a simple test to point out that not every translation of the Bible contains the exact same teachings. This came from an e-Sword user group posting (I apologize for not remembering who the group member was), and makes an interesting study.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Using the New International Version Bible, answer the following questions.

Do not rely on your memory. As the Bible is the final authority, you must take the answer from the Bible verse (not from footnotes but from the text).

1. Fill in the missing words in Matthew 5:44. "Love your enemies, _____ them that curse you, _____ to them that hate you, and pray for them that _____ and persecute you."

2. According to Matthew 17:21, what two things are required to cast out this type of demon?

3. According to Matthew 18:11, why did Jesus come to earth?

4. According to Matthew 27:2, what was Pilate's first name?

5. In Matthew 27:35, when the wicked soldiers parted His garments, they were fulfilling the words of the prophet. Copy what the prophet said in Matthew 27:35 from the NIV.

6. In Mark 3:15, Jesus gave the apostles power to cast out demons and to: _____
7. According to Mark 7:16, what does a man need to be able to hear?
8. According to Luke 7:28, what was John? (teacher, prophet, carpenter, etc.). What is his title or last name?
9. In Luke 9:55, what did the disciples not know?
10. In Luke 9:56, what did the Son of man not come to do? According to this verse, what did He come to do?
11. In Luke 22:14, how many apostles were with Jesus?
12. According to Luke 23:38, in what three languages was the superscription written?
13. In Luke 24:42, what did they give Jesus to eat with His fish?
14. John 3:13 is a very important verse, proving the deity of Christ. According to this verse (as Jesus spoke), where is the Son of man?
15. What happened each year as told in John 5:4?
16. In John 7:50, what time of day did Nicodemus come to Jesus?
17. In Acts 8:37, what is one requirement for baptism?
18. What did Saul ask Jesus in Acts 9:6?
19. Write the name of the man mentioned in Acts 15:34.
20. Study Acts 24:6-8. What would the Jew have done with Paul? What was the chief captain's name? What did the chief captain command?
21. Copy Romans 16:24 word for word from the NIV.
22. First Timothy 3:16 is perhaps the greatest verse in the New Testament concerning the deity of Christ. In this verse, who was manifested in the flesh?
23. In the second part of First Peter 4:14, how do [they] speak of Christ? And, what do we Christians do?
24. Who are the three Persons of the Trinity in First John 5:7?
25. Revelation 1:11 is another very important verse that proves the deity of Christ. In the first part of this verse Jesus said, "I am the A_____ and O_____, the _____ and the _____:"

Conclusion: Little space is provided for your answers, but it's much more than needed. If you followed the instructions above, you not only failed the test, you receive a big goose egg.

(Ed. These are all missing in the NIV.) So now what do you think of your "accurate, easy to understand, up to date Bible"?

If you would like to improve your score, and in fact score 100%, you can take this test using the Authorized (King James) Bible

End of Test

Conclusion:

Although there are many inconsistency's between these two very popular translations of the Bible, we must remember to show LOVE towards those who don't necessarily share our own viewpoints on which translation to

use. These are highly disputable matters. We each need to gain knowledge and confidence from reading of this most important of texts, and that means that this debate will probably never be decided.

Unfortunately, not even all of the modern translator's believe that the Bible is truly "given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16), and therefore have no real problem altering it slightly where it suits them. If a translator believes that the Bible is really only a book, nothing more, why would they fear to "Add to or take away from" the Word of God?

I believe, and most scholars agree, that we must remember that God has taken pains to put His Word down for us to read. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that there is a quality to the Word that makes it go beyond the mere ink on the page. It is written to our hearts, and prayer and desire to learn God's Will, I believe, give it the power to overcome all of the translational difficulties I have noted here.

This does not mean we should disregard completely the whole topic of accurate translation, but we should not allow these disputes to unsettle us and make us afraid that we are being misled when we study Scripture.

I learned a great deal from my use of the NIV. I read it because it was easy to follow along with. I read more often than I did when I was using the RSV, and I quickly put "Miles on the Odometer", in other words, I read the entire Bible through many times because of the ease of the reading of the NIV.

Only when I started doing more advanced study, did I start to find the problems that eventually led me to discontinue using the NIV. Now I don't even refer to it when I want to study a passage more thoroughly, I simply have lost confidence in it. But, I respect that for many Christians, this version is their Bible of choice.

However I may feel, I know that there are a lot of brethren who love the NIV, and I would never want to take that love away from them. Many of the key doctrinal verses translated with a bias by the NIV translators, are also taught properly elsewhere in their own version, so over all, with an applied effort the truth can still be garnered...it just takes more diligence to discover it (and that is not necessarily a bad result!).

In the end, the Word of God is simply more powerful than the men who translate it, even if they purposefully try to change it to suit their own beliefs. There are very bad Bible translations out there (usually written by one religious group, or by an individual), and these should be avoided at all cost. But the NIV is not as evil as some portray it to be, it just isn't all it claims to be either.

If the only Bible I could get my hands on was an NIV, I would read it daily, but I would be very careful using it. But as long as we have the freedom to use whatever version we choose, I will stick with the KJV (which I also should be careful with).

(note, the New King James Version (NKJV) is not in my opinion much better than the NIV. It is an "update" to the KJV that also makes changes to key texts...check on the internet for more information on all of the different translations).

Notes

"Textual Criticism" is one of the terms used for searching for information on this subject. A couple of starting places:

Darrell Broking teaches a class for the Online Academy of Biblical Studies on this subject, you can find it at the following link:

www.oabs.org/ondemand/classes.asp?PageNo=21#BrokingDarrell

Another site that goes fairly in depth on this subject is:

www.cob-net.org/compare.htm

Let us remember that we are brethren, and try not to let these arguments get us to the point that we despise each other. No matter how much we may wish it to be, we simply aren't likely to ever get to the point that we all use the same translation, and so we must make allowances to a point with each other.

Ideally, I think everyone would like the same thing; a easily read, easily understood, and perfectly accurate Bible from which to hear the Word of God. Hopefully someday we will have it, but in the meantime let us do the very best with what we have.