

There are basically three different types of translation styles used when creating the different versions of the Bible we see today. The first is called “formal equivalence”, which attempts to keep as close to the “form” of the Hebrew or Greek, both words and grammar, as can be conveniently put into understandable English. The second is called the “functional equivalence”, which attempts to keep the meaning of the Hebrew or Greek but puts their words and idioms into what would be the normal way of saying the same thing in English. This attempts to “update” matters of language, grammar, and style. The last style of translation is the “free translation”, which attempts to translate the ideas from one language to another, with less concern about using the exact words or the original.

I’ve chosen three translations to compare that each represent a different style of translation used—

King James Version uses the formal equivalence, or “literal” style of translation. (Based on the “Textus Receptus” texts)

New International Version uses the functional equivalence, or “dynamic” style of translation. (Based on the “Vaticanus” and “Sinaiticus” texts)

New Living Translation uses the free translation, or “paraphrasing” style of translation. (Based on the “Vaticanus” and “Sinaiticus” texts)

Below each verse, I’ve added my comments and/or questions in order to get you to reflect back on the different translations of the same verse. I hope that this raises questions about whether a given translation actually alters the theme and/or doctrinal teaching of the scriptures.

ACTS 19:16

KJV—

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: **God was manifest in the flesh**, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, **received up into glory**.

NIV--

Without question, this is the great mystery of our faith: **Christ appeared in the flesh** and was shown to be righteous by the Spirit. He was seen by angels and was announced to the nations. He was believed on in the world and was **taken up into heaven**.

NLT—

Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: **He appeared in a body**, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was **taken up in glory**.

- While the KJV is saying that Jesus was actually “God in the flesh”, the others are simply saying that this man Jesus, the Christ, appeared in an actual, fleshly body. Can you see the difference?
- Was Jesus taken up into heaven, or was he received up into glory? Glory and heaven are two different ideas.

MATTHEW 24:41

KJV—

Two [women shall be] grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.

NIV—

Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

NLT—

Two women will be grinding flour at the mill; one will be taken, the other left.

- Were the women at the mill, or were they just holding a mill? I know that this doesn't seem like a big issue, but when you find in the scriptures that things like "bread" and "Egypt" and "leaven" actually symbolize deeper things ("the word of God", the "world", and a corrupting agent, respectively), then it matters whether they were grinding flour or not.

MATTHEW 5:22

KJV—

But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his **brother without a cause** shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

NIV—

But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his **brother** will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

NLT—

But I say, if you are angry with **someone**, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the high council. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.

- Being angry with your brother "without a cause" is a LOT different from just being angry with him.
- In the New Testament, the term "brother" is used to reference those that are "of the faith".
Therefore, does the inclusion, or exclusion, of the word "brother" change it's meaning?

JOHN 8:25

KJV—

Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even [the same] that I said unto you **from the beginning**.

NIV—

“Who are you?” they asked.

“Just what I have been claiming **all along**,” Jesus replied.

NLT—

“Tell us who you are,” they demanded. Jesus replied, “I am the one I have **always claimed to be**.”

- Is Jesus talking about what He’s been saying “from the beginning”, or just since He’s started His ministry? The point is this—“the beginning” can point back to the beginning of God’s Word, as the apostle John does in the verse few verses of his gospel, or not.

1 JOHN 5:7-8

KJV—

7 For there are three that bear record **in heaven**, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

8 And there are three that bear witness **in earth**, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

NIV—

7 For there are three **that testify**:

8 the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

Footnote:

Late manuscripts of the Vulgate read “testify in heaven: the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.”⁸ And there are three that testify on earth...” However, this is not found in any Greek manuscript before the sixteenth century

NLT—

7 So we have these three witnesses **..????..-**

8 the Spirit, the water, and the blood-and all three agree.

Footnote:

Some very late manuscripts add *in heaven—the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. And we have three witnesses on earth.*

- In numerous other places in scripture we see the distinction between “heaven” and “earth”. This is of primary importance when reading the promises to Abraham, and the proclamation of the offer of

the kingdom found in the New Testament (which points to the heavenly part of the kingdom, not the earthly).

- Notice in the KJV that the three that bear witness in heaven are different than those that bear record in heaven. Why are they not differentiated in the other two translations?
- “Agreeing”, and “agreeing in one” are similar ideas, but different.

HEBREWS 1:3

KJV—

Who being the brightness of [his] glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding **all things** by the word of his power, when he had **by himself** purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

NIV—

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining **all things** by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

NLT—

The Son reflects God's own glory, and everything about him represents God exactly. He sustains **the universe** by the mighty power of his command. After he died to cleanse us from the stain of sin, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God of heaven.

- Is it important that Christ purged our sins “by Himself”?
- Is “all things” the same as “the universe”? Check out Colossians 1:16, 20. What does it say “all things” are?

MATTHEW 1:25

KJV—

And knew her not till she had brought forth her **firstborn** son: and he called his name JESUS.

NIV—

But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

NLT—

but she remained a virgin until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.

- Being a “son” and being a “firstborn” son are distinctly different. Does it matter here?

LUKE 4:18

KJV—

The Spirit of the Lord [is] upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; **he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted**, to preach deliverance **to** the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

NIV—

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom **for** the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,

NLT—

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has appointed me to preach Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives **will be** released, that the blind **will** see, that the downtrodden **will** be freed from their oppressors,

- Notice that the phrase, “heal the brokenhearted” is only in the KJV. Healing was a huge part (I would say *the central part*) of Jesus’ earthly ministry.
- Preaching TO someone is a lot different than preaching that they WILL BE released. We know that in fact the ones that Jesus was preaching to did not accept his offer—so THEY were not delivered, but others were.
- Yes, essentially, from a broad perspective, these verses are saying (kind of) the same thing. Does it matter that it is different?

Here’s a different approach, which shows the need to have *at least two different versions* of a Bible that employed the “formal equivalent” style of translation— The KJV version used the “Textus Receptus” codex of manuscripts, and the NASB used other Greek texts for its primary source.

MARK 10:21

KJV—

Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, **take up the cross**, and follow me.

NASB—

Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, “One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

- The “take up the cross” part is found elsewhere in other scriptures, and describes what following Jesus looks like. Given the context of this verse, which translation seems more accurate?

MARK 10:24

KJV—

And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it **for them that trust in riches** to enter into the kingdom of God!

NASB—

The disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus *answered again and *said to them, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!

- Again, missing words from the NASB. But it changes the meaning, doesn't it?

LUKE 4:4

KJV—

And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, **but by every word of God.**

NASB—

And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE.' "

- This is self-explanatory.

PSALM 8:5

KJV—

For thou hast made him a little lower than **the angels**, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

NASB—

Yet You have made him a little lower **than God**, And You crown him with glory and majesty!

- Big difference...is it God or the angels? Well, look at Hebrews 2:7 and you'll see that it really should be “angels”.

1 JOHN 4:3

KJV—

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is **come in the flesh** is not of God: and this is that [spirit] of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

NASB—

and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the {spirit} of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

- Not confessing that Jesus came *in the flesh* is a lot different from just not confessing Him.

REVELATION 21:24

KJV—

And the nations **of them which are saved** shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.

NASB—

The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.

- Just “the nations”, or “the nations of them which are saved”?

COLOSSIANS 2:18

KJV—

Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into **those things which he hath not seen**, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

NASB—

Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, **taking his stand on {visions} he has seen**, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,

- Did he see something or not?

ACTS 17:22

KJV—

Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, [Ye] men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are **too superstitious**.

NASB—

So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are **very religious** in all respects.

- Religion and superstition are two different things that conjure up different ideas within man's mind.

COLOSSIANS 1:14

KJV—

In whom we have redemption **through his blood**, [even] the forgiveness of sins:

NASB—

in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

- Is knowing that the redemption comes through His blood an important detail? Or is that something that the reader already knows and assumes? Check out Hebrews 9:22 and the surrounding context to determine if the mention of blood is necessary.

REVELATION 15:3

KJV—

And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous [are] thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true [are] thy ways, thou King of **saints**.

NASB—

And they *sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the **nations!**"

- "King of saints" and "King of nations" are two different things. The saints are not reckoned among the nations, for "nations" are most often spoken of as Gentiles, neither Jew nor Christian.

1 JOHN 5:13

KJV—

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, **and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.**

NASB—

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

- I imagine that the NASB translators thought that this was redundant, and therefore it wasn't needed. However, knowing that we must first believe in order to be saved (spirit) , and then we must continue to believe in order to be saved (soul)... maybe it is in there for a reason?

GALATIANS 6:15

KJV—

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new **creature**.

NASB—

For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new **creation**.

- "Creature" and "creation" have two different scriptural meanings.

GALATIANS 4:7

KJV—

Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir **of God through Christ**.

NASB—

Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir **through God**.

- An heir through Christ is different from an heir through God, although they are one and the same. And being an heir of God (which would literally be "God's heir") through Christ is different than saying an heir through God.

EPHESIANS 3:9

KJV—

And to make all [men] see what [is] the fellowship of the mystery, which **from the beginning of the world** hath been hid in God, who created all things **by Jesus Christ**:

NASB—

and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which **for ages** has been hidden in God who created all things;

- "For ages" is a lot longer than "from the beginning of the world". The world that we know was created at the beginning of this age.

- Yes, Jesus is God and God is Jesus...but saying that all things were created by Jesus Christ affirms His divinity.

COLOSSIANS 1:2

KJV—

To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace [be] unto you, and peace, from God our Father **and the Lord Jesus Christ**.

NASB—

To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ {who are} at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

- Again, something's been left out.

Let's take a look at something else that affects how we read and interpret the different English translations of the Bible. Individual word translation can change the meaning of a whole thought, and sometimes even the doctrine, that the writer intended to convey. Here are some examples, along with commentary.

1 TIMOTHY 2:9-14

1Ti 2:9 ¶ In like manner also, that **women** adorn themselves in modest apparel, with **shamefacedness** and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; 10 But (which becometh **women** professing godliness) with good works. 11 Let the **woman** learn in silence with all subjection. 12 But I suffer not a **woman** to teach, nor to usurp authority over **the man**, but to be in silence.

- The word “woman” is actually the word “wife”, not just “woman” in general. The word for “man” is to be read literally, “the husband”. This entire passage is misunderstood primarily because of the lack of distinction of these two words.
- Also, “professing godliness” should be understood in terms of her actually preaching righteous behavior to others...not in the sense that if she claims to be godly she needs to dress this way. We can understand this in the sense of modesty being a necessity to those who wish to preach to others. Also, “shamefacedness” is actually translated as “reverence” [an admirable quality, which we are to have when we approach God] in other passages. Entire church doctrines have been built on this error, to the detriment of many.

HEBREWS 12:5-7

Heb 12:5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto **children**, My **son**, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every **son** whom he receiveth. 7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with **sons**; for what **son** is he whom the father chasteneth not?

- The word “son” is the Greek word “huios”, which is often translated as “child”, mistakenly. The Greeks have a word for “child”—“teknon”. Being a son to God and being a child to God are TWO different things in scripture. A son (in particular a firstborn son) receives an inheritance; a child does not. A son can rule in God’s house, a child cannot.

1 TIMOTHY 6:12

1Ti 6:12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on **eternal** life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

- The word translated “eternal” is actually the Greek noun “age”, but in adjective form. So literally, it should read “age-y”. It is a descriptive term for the noun “life”. The Western mind thinks in terms of infinity, whereas the Greek mind did not. They thought in terms of “ages”—periods of time, with a beginning and an end. They could express ideas like “infinity” by stacking ages upon each other, literally “age upon age”. This is probably the most confusing, and been the most damaging, of the poor word translations found in the English versions of Scripture.

MATTHEW 4:17

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of **heaven** is at hand.

- The word “heaven” should actually be translated “the heavens”, because in the Greek it contains a definite article (THE) and the noun “heaven” is in the plural form. How could the translators mess that up? It may have something to do with man’s idea of “Heaven” and it being some ethereal place of clouds, gold, and happiness. In reality, “the heavens” is a term for that which makes up the sky and the reaches of space beyond the earth, as well as the dwelling place of God the

Father (which is actually called the “third heaven”) The birds fly in it (we can see parts of it) and the stars are in it. It has a broad meaning, and it has a narrow meaning, depending on the context of the passage. Unfortunately, this poor translation has done nothing but muddle up our view of this “kingdom”.

PSALM 16:10

Ps 16:10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in **hell**; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

- Here’s an example of a mistranslation of the Hebrew word “Sheol”. Most times it is simply translated “hell”, although it is the name of an actual place called “Sheol”, which is simply the place of the dead (and has nothing to do with eternally damned people going to a place of torment. Actually, the word “hell” is very misleading in that the scriptures do not even contain that word. In essence, “hell”, as the Western Christian mind has been taught to understand it, does not exist).

LUKE 16:23

Lu 16:23 And in **hell** he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

- This is the Greek word “Hades”, which is the same place as “Sheol”. It is a place of the dead, where all people go when they die (saved and unsaved alike). This is where they await judgment; judgment that takes place at a future date.

MATTHEW 18:9

Mt 18:9 And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into **hell** fire.

- This is the Greek word “Gehenna”, which is an actual place that is different from “Hades”. Gehenna is always referred to as the alternative to entering the kingdom (“life” in this verse). Gehenna is associated with “weeping and gnashing of teeth”, as well as “the outer darkness”.

There is one other place in the scriptures associated with “hell”, and that is the “lake of fire”. The lake of fire was prepared for the devil and his angels, and is referred to as the place for the unsaved.

There is one last point to make regarding the English translations and the errors that they contain. The original languages of Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, contained no punctuation (and the Hebrew contained no vowels, just imagine the problems with that!). Therefore, when we read a sentence in the modern English that contains punctuation that in itself makes the reader understand the thought a certain way, we need to stop and ask ourselves if what we are reading is the actual intention of the original. It may just be the assumption of the translators. Here is one such example:

LUKE 23:43

Lu 23:43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today thou shalt be with me in paradise.

- This verse, written is just this way, means that Jesus is telling this man that he would be with Jesus, in Paradise, that very day.

What would this sentence mean if you moved the comma to *after* “today”, so that it would read,

“And Jesus said unto him (the thief on the cross next to Him), ‘Verily I say unto thee today, thou shalt be with me in paradise.’”

- It now means that Jesus is informing this man on that particular day (*today*) that he would be with Jesus in Paradise at some later point in time.

Hopefully this has given you some food for thought on the subject of English translations. They are not all created equally! There must be some investigation on your part in order to determine the validity of the wording, and the Scriptures as a whole must be congruent and complementary, without contradictions and errors. After all, the Scriptures are God’s very breath, and we know that there is no error in Him... *none at all*. If we find problems then we must assign them to human error. We must.