

# BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

Which is Best?

Darrin Yeager

## Bible Translations

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## Chapter 1

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# Introduction

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One of Satan's early strategies involves casting doubt on God's Word. Recall Satan's words "Has God really said?" confusing Eve and causing her to sin. Satan realizes casting doubt on what God says can be a winning strategy for him — what could cause more confusion than casting doubt the Bible in your lap isn't the exact Word of God?

This strategy continues using the Bible translation debate. Is the King James really the best translation? What about old language? Shouldn't newer translations be used? Many views exist, and unfortunately some people involved become hostile defending their choice.

However, considering Satan's strategy of creating doubt in God's Word the translation and preservation of the Bible becomes critically important; you can't dismiss the concept and use whatever translation you pick off the shelf. You need balance; getting that balance requires effort — you need to do some homework. Fortunately acquiring a basic familiarity with the issues can be accomplished with a surprisingly small effort; you don't require a PhD to understand.

Anyone translating languages quickly understands it's *impossible* to completely and accurately translate between languages. The translator must choose different wording to convey the original idea; sometimes it's impossible to express the idea of one language in another. As such, the original always surpasses the copy for accuracy; translation forces compromises, subject to the personal ideas of the translator (which explains why we must understand the personal ideas of the translator).

The idea a *perfect* translation exists quickly disappears — they *all* have problems; understanding which translations have which problems is important. In the following pages, we'll consider issues affecting translation, and how those issues impact various translations.

Be careful not to fall for something just because most scholars accept it. That means nothing. How frequently have you heard “most real scientists agree man-made global warming is real”?

That's the argument from majority (most all) and authority (scientists) errors, with the no true Scotsman fallacy thrown in as a bonus. Are those valid reasons to accept their idea? Consider other times “most scientists” agreed:

- Evolution: Piltdown man
- Medicine: Leaches
- Geography: flat earth
- Physics: Failure to recognize Quantum Mechanics

Each of those the “majority” of “authorities” believed. All were wrong. They convince people because holding an advanced PhD somehow provides more credibility than a regular person. And if most of those PhDs hold the same opinion? Bingo! The argument from majority authority.

People believing (or not believing) truth doesn't matter. If you're in the minority, don't worry about it, and if you're in the majority, don't take that as proof you're right — Bible “scholars” tell you they agree:

- Moses didn't write the first five books
- Daniel didn't write his book
- Modern translations are superior to traditional ones
- Two “Isaiahs” wrote the book bearing his name

Everybody (or nobody) can believe ridiculous ideas like the deuterio Isaiah hypothesis. It's still garbage. Don't fall for their agreement on a stupid theory — agreement only means they're all wrong. Be aware of the argument from majority and authority, as they're frequently appealed to by people who simply can't defend their ideas.

## Chapter 2

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# Bible Translation Primer

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This section contains technical background, but nothing you can't handle — don't skip this section! It's critically important you obtain a foundation for evaluating Bible translations.

### 2.1 Issues Affecting Translation

When considering Bible translation, many issues arise but for simplicity we'll stick with two; these main issues concern you trying to understand the Bible translation debate.

1. What you're translating *from*. Two main lines of Greek texts exist with substantial differences.
2. *How* you translate what you've got. In other words, do you attempt to translate literally, or use more paraphrasing?

### Textual Issues

#### **PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE**

Written 2,000 years ago, do we have correct and accurate copies of the original New Testament? A quick glance at the following chart\* illustrates the accuracy of the New Testament passed down to us, compared to other ancient writings.

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\* Eastman and Missler "The Bible: An Extraterrestrial Message" page 10

Document	Date	Copies	% Purity
Homer's Iliad	800 BC	643	95
Herodotus	480 BC	8	?
Plato's Tetralogies	427 BC	7	?
Caesar's Gallic Wars	44 BC	10	?
New Testament	50–95 AD	25,366	>99.5

If we don't accept the validity and accuracy of the Bible, we must throw out much more than the Bible. Do we doubt writings with considerably less sources? The existence of George Washington? With considerable manuscript evidence, the Bible stands apart from other ancient writings.

*Norman Geisler, a world renowned Bible scholar echoed this when he states: "Only 400 words of the NT are in doubt, whereas 764 lines of the Iliad are questioned. This five percent textual corruption (in the Iliad) compares with one-half of one percent of similar emendations in the New Testament"\**

Faithful scribes preserved the Bible through the centuries as originally written; we can be confident with the accuracy of our copies; many differences exist only in spelling or other minor issues.

## TEXTUAL HISTORY

Two main lines of Greek texts exist, diverging in minor but important ways. The text used almost exclusively until the 1800's was Textus Receptus. However, manuscript discoveries in Alexandria changed some scholars' views. But are those manuscripts reliable?

In 1525, Erasmus compiled Greek texts from Byzantium, which had been used for centuries, forming Textus Receptus,<sup>†</sup> and the main text the KJV translators used. Although they had Alexandrian texts available (Codex Sinaiticus, etc), the KJV translators obviously felt the Alexandrian text base (later to become Westcott-Hort) was unsuitable.

Westcott and Hort compiled a Greek New Testament about 1850–1880, relying heavily on the previously rejected Alexandrian Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, changing the Greek in over 8,000 places.<sup>‡</sup> We'll treat these Alexandrian texts similarly and

\* Eastman and Missler "The Bible: An Extraterrestrial Message" page 11–12

† Chuck Missler, "How we got our Bible," page 17–18

‡ Chuck Missler, "How we got our Bible," page 18

refer to them collectively as Westcott-Hort (not technically correct, but for our purposes it's close enough). How they edited the text, the reasons why and their background becomes critical to understanding newer translations derived from Westcott-Hort's work.

Only three common modern translations use the Textus Receptus Greek text (KJV, NKJV, MEV); others (NASB, NIV, ESV, etc) use Westcott-Hort or Alexandrian texts. After studying these a bit (which we'll get to), it becomes apparent Westcott-Hort edited the text for theological reasons; the influence of early Gnostic heresy runs through Westcott-Hort's text.

For ease of discussion we're grouping various families of texts, which although not entirely accurate, proves sufficient for our purposes. For our uses, Byzantine, Textus Receptus and the Majority Text can be treated as equivalent, and simply called Textus Receptus, while Westcott-Hort, UBS, and Nestle-Aland will be treated as the Alexandrian line and referred to as Westcott and Hort or Alexandrian.

### **GNOSTIC INFLUENCE — WESTCOTT AND HORT**

Early in church history a heretical group sprang up called the Gnostics, teaching all matter was evil; since all matter is evil, Jesus really didn't have a physical body and no physical resurrection occurred. The Gnostics also believed they had special knowledge, leading to spiritual elitism in the early church.

Gnostic teaching on the evilness of material leads to two errors. On one side was a form of asceticism — the path to heaven comes by denying yourself (the extreme puritanical view). On the other side, your body (since it is evil) doesn't matter. If you use drugs it doesn't matter since your physical body is evil anyway.

The Gnostic heresy Jesus didn't have a body denies His death, physical resurrection, and thus His atonement for our sins. The apostle John wrote his first letter (1 John) in part to combat Gnostic heresy. John writes he saw and handled Jesus — Jesus had a physical body. Even more, John warned anyone stating Jesus did not come *in the flesh* is not of God.

*Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: 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.*

1 John 4:2-3 KJV



John's single statement debunks all Gnostic heresy. Why then is academia so enamored by it? Why would Westcott-Hort follow heresy obviously contradicting Biblical teaching? Why have we allowed people rejecting Biblical teaching to edit God's Word?

Westcott and Hort edited the original Greek as they compiled their edition, but as we shall see, Gnostic philosophy influenced both men. The Greek texts they used frequently appear footnoted in your Bible as "the oldest and best manuscripts." Yes, they're the oldest, but are they the best? Westcott and Hort held strange theological views — do we trust them with God's Word? Consider the words of Westcott and Hort themselves.

*But the book which has most engaged me is Darwin. Whatever may be thought of it, it is a book that one is proud to be contemporary with. I must work out and examine the argument more in detail, but at present my feeling is strong that the theory is unanswerable.\**

*... I am inclined to think that no such state as "Eden" (I mean the popular notion) ever existed, and that Adam's fall in no degree differed from the fall of each of his descendants ... †*

*No one now, I suppose, holds that the first three chapters of Genesis, for example, give a literal history — I could never understand how any one reading them with open eyes could think they did ... ‡*

*Christians are themselves in a true sense "Christs"§*

These are their views. They're entitled to them, of course, but do they agree with your Bible reading? In light of John's warning about Gnostic heresy, can we trust these men to compile an accurate Greek text? As we'll see in examples, they allowed un-orthodox views to influence their compilation of the Holy Scriptures — in some ways that simply make no sense.

The Bible must be considered an integrated message to be used whole and complete. As soon as editing begins, contradictions and other problems arise. No way exists for Westcott-Hort (or anyone else) to edit the Biblical text and keep it consistent.

\* Life of Hort Vol I page 416 <http://books.google.com/books?id=Rxc3AAAAAAAJ>

† Life of Hort Vol I page 78 <http://books.google.com/books?id=Rxc3AAAAAAAJ>

‡ Life of Westcott Vol II page 19 <http://books.google.com/books?id=CwMW115WoGEC>

§ The Epistles of St. John page 73 <http://books.google.com/books?id=Tk9Wa8KE-JoC>

Go back and re-read the previous paragraph and make sure it sinks in. If the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of God, any internal inconsistencies in a manuscript cause the rejection of that manuscript. No need to spend countless library hours researching archaeological and historical records, if the manuscript contains serious internal errors it must be rejected.

## 2.2 Paraphrase or Literal?

Once a translator decides on the textual base (Textus Receptus or Westcott-Hort), they must decide exactly how to translate — literal or paraphrase? Both have pros and cons, but mostly you want to know where on the scale a translation lies. If you've ever picked up a Greek-English interlinear you know it can be difficult to read, as this example shows.

*so For loved God the world, so as the Son of Him, the Only-begotten, He gave, that everyone believing into Him not may perish, but have life everlasting.\**

This issue becomes clouded as each company wants you to believe they somehow combine the best of both worlds (which isn't possible), thus introducing buzz-phrases like “dynamic equivalence,” “formal equivalence,” and other ideas more suited to marketing than description. Every translation paraphrases a bit.

The question isn't literal vs. paraphrase, but how much paraphrasing does the translator perform? A translator trying to remain literal performs the minimum required to put the sentence into grammatically correct English and no more, while a paraphrase tries to convey the *idea* of the original without using the exact wording of the original and may take into account cultural or other differences.

Weights and measures provide one easy example. How many people know what a cubit is? Or that 4 cubits make one fathom? Or 1 firkin is about 9 gallons? In a literal translation, these quantities translate as-is, and it's up to you to understand what they are. In a paraphrase translation, these appear in modern measures.

It's easiest to show this issue with examples, so we'll move right to it.

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\* John 3:16 Interlinear Greek-English NT, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Jay P. Green

## 2.3 Examples

### Literal vs Paraphrase

Consider 2 Timothy 2:15 in two translations and examine how the paraphrase problem presents itself.

*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (KJV)*

“Rightly divide” translates the Greek word *orthotomeo* (from *orthos*) — you might recognize as similar to the math term *orthogonal* meaning a right angle. So the KJV is literal. But do you know what it means? If you have a math background you understand *orthogonal* as precise, an exact right angle, as the KJV accurately and literally translates the Greek. Now consider the NIV.

*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. (NIV)*

“Correctly handles” is not literal, but for many people brings the truth of the verse out better. But notice instead of “study” the NIV uses “do your best” which completely changes the meaning making it less clear. Study implies dedication or devotion, while just doing your best can mean a lot less. John chapter 7 provides another example.

*His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world.*  
John 7:3–4 KJV

You might miss Jesus’ brothers picking on Him a little; since they didn’t believe Jesus was God, they’re actually baiting Him to show His stuff. Now compare the New Living Translation.

*Jesus’ brothers urged him to go to Judea for the celebration. “Go where your followers can see your miracles!” they scoffed. “You can’t become a public figure if you hide like this! If you can do such wonderful things, prove it to the world!”*

John 7:3–4 NLT

In these two examples both the advantages and disadvantages of literal and paraphrase translation become apparent. Literal translation normally provides the most benefit, but sometimes referring to a paraphrase proves advantageous.

## Textual

We're using KJV and NKJV as examples of Textus Receptus, and as a representative of Westcott-Hort, the NIV (and also the NASB or the New American Standard Bible). Westcott-Hort influence most "modern" translations, even if they don't follow exactly the full changes Westcott-Hort made (NIV more, NASB less). Some translations include the changes in footnotes, others include in the main text.

*(Matthew 18:11 NKJV) For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.*

*(Matthew 18:11 KJV) For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.*

*(Matthew 18:11 NIV) **deleted***

NIV deletes entirely, while NASB brackets it as probably not in the original text. Why delete this verse? Perhaps if you believe (as Westcott) we're all true Christs, thus have no need of salvation.

*(Matthew 25:13 NKJV) Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which **the Son of Man is coming**.*

*(Matthew 25:13 KJV) Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein **the Son of man cometh**.*

*(Matthew 25:13 NIV) Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.*

That's a bizarre change. Why would I keep watch if I don't know what time it was? But it's not the time, it's the time of Jesus' return you don't know. Jesus taught to always look for His return — it can come anytime.

*(Mark 2:17 NKJV) When Jesus heard it, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, **to repentance**."*

*(Mark 2:17 KJV) When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners **to repentance**.*

*(Mark 2:17 NIV) On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

Another fun one. Jesus didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners. For what? An invitation to dinner? To Saturday's football game? (NASB contains similar edit to NIV).

*(Acts 8:37 NKJV) Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."*

*(Acts 8:37 KJV) And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*

*(Acts 8:37 NIV) **deleted***

If you didn't believe Jesus was God, you certainly wouldn't want it in your text so you delete it. NASB brackets as not in original text.

*(Ephesians 3:9 NKJV) and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things **through Jesus Christ**;*

*(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**:*

*(Ephesians 3:9 NIV) and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.*

NIV has God creating all things, NOT Jesus — which you wouldn't want to say if you accept Gnostic heresy. Here Westcott-Hort directly contradict Paul in Colossians 1:16-17 who attributes creation to Jesus. In Colossians 1:17, Paul even states Jesus holds the atoms of the universe together. (NASB contains similar edit to NIV).

*(1 Peter 4:1 NKJV) Therefore, since Christ suffered **for us** in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,*

*(1 Peter 4:1 KJV) Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered **for us** in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;*

*(1 Peter 4:1 NIV) Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because whoever suffers in the body is done with sin.*

Jesus didn't just suffer, he suffered and died *for us*. NASB with similar edit to NIV.

*(Revelation 11:17 NKJV) saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and **who is to come**, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.*

*(Revelation 11:17 KJV) Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and **art to come**; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.*

*(Revelation 11:17 NIV) saying: "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.*

Denying the return of Jesus. (NASB similar to NIV).

In these few examples, you can see how Westcott-Hort personal theology (or lack thereof) influenced their compilation of the Greek text. Some of these changes contradict other areas of the Bible, while others make no sense at all. Since the inerrant Word of God contains no errors, it must be Westcott-Hort making the mistakes.

## 2.4 King James Only

Some claim the KJV as the only true Bible, claiming the translators of the KJV were divinely inspired just as Peter, Paul and John were. Unfortunately, no basis for this exists. They claim the KJV as the "perfect" Bible in English and put in on par with the original Greek. But as anyone translating languages quickly discovers, it's *impossible* to accurately translate one language to another.

My father tells me a story of someone who was KJV-Only and said when he finished reading another translation, he just tossed

it on the coffee table. But when he finished reading the KJV, he reverently and gently placed it back from whence it came. That's idolatry.

The KJV ranks as one of the best translations, although it's not the only translation that has use.

## 2.5 Olde English

Some would throw away the KJV due to it's old English. Certainly some believe that a valid reason, but shouldn't prevent your use of it; when studying any technical subject (math or science), certain terminology must be learned. The KJV is no different. Remember you're reading text 2,000 years old from a different culture — it's going to be different.

The first problem pops up with archaic words. Dictionaries exist if you need help, but you'll quickly become accustomed to the vocabulary. The bigger issue arises from words you *think* you know, but changed meaning over time; unless you're aware of them you'll definitely have problems reading the KJV.

*For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.*

1 Thessalonians 4:15 KJV

Any new translation translates “prevent” as “precede”; the word prevent changed meaning between 1611 and now and if you didn't know this verse makes no sense.

*For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.*

2 Thessalonians 2:7 KJV

“Let” changed meaning to “hinder.” Again, any recent translation correctly translates this verse (both of these verses change in the NKJV as well).

The other problem with old English arises from the thees and thous in the KJV. However, these serve to differentiate singular and plural in the text. Consider the following chart:\*

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\* <http://av1611.com/kjbp/articles/bacon-theethou.html>

	NOM	OBJ	POSS
1 <sup>st</sup> Singular	I	Me	My
1 <sup>st</sup> Plural	We	Us	Our
2 <sup>nd</sup> Singular	Thou	Thee	Thy
2 <sup>nd</sup> Plural	Ye	You	Your
3 <sup>rd</sup> Singular	He	Him	His
3 <sup>rd</sup> Plural	They	Them	Their

NOM = nominative, case of the subject

OBJ = objective, case of the object of the verb

POSS = possessive, case of possessing.

Why is this important? Consider Luke 22:31–32.

*And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*

Luke 22:31–32 KJV

Satan asked for much more than Peter — perhaps the entire group! However, Jesus prays for Peter *himself*. The distinction easily missed in other translations (including NKJV) the KJV makes abundantly clear (a similar situation also occurs in Exodus 4:15).

## 2.6 Comparison of Translations

So how do we rate the various translations? The following chart provides a guide for modern translations, showing which textual base they follow and a rough guide of how literally they translate the original Greek.

Translation	Textual Base	Literal Scale
KJV	TR	1
NKJV	TR	1
MEV	TR	1–2
NASB	WH	1–2
ESV	WH	2–3
NIV	WH	4
NLT	WH	6
The Message	?	9

TR = Textus Receptus

WH = Westcott-Hort



Literal scale runs from 0 (a perfect literal much like a Greek-English interlinear) to 10 (a complete paraphrase — the translator reads a paragraph and the translates it without trying to be literal).

It's important to know just because newer translations are marked as Westcott-Hort does not necessarily imply they follow *all* of Westcott-Hort; each translation handles it differently. Some footnote, some delete, some ignore Westcott-Hort changes in some places.

Do you know the foundation of the translation you use, and do you understand the methodology and beliefs/bias of the people translating it? Picking a translation just because you like the way it reads is foolish, and quite dangerous. You need to do some homework and check it out for yourself — just because a new easy-to-read translation comes out (and is “scholarly”) doesn't mean it's good. How can you know you're being deceived if you don't do your own homework?

*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me; seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.*  
Hosea 4:6 KJV

Once edits to the Word of God begin for language, gender, or other reasons, where does it stop? How much editing can be done to God's Word before it becomes unacceptable? After how many edits does the Bible cease to be a Bible? Who gets to choose what edits should be made? And why? Those questions each Christian needs to answer for themselves.

Christians should reject the corrupt Alexandrian Westcott-Hort modern critical text. However, we are not espousing the “KJV-Only” position — accept *any* soundly translated Bible from Textus Receptus. People who want a Bible with an easier to read modern vocabulary may choose NKJV or MEV.

Don't believe anything anyone tells you — be a Berean (Acts 17:11) and do your own research and don't believe so-called scholars coming up with absurd scholarly-sounding theories like the documentary hypothesis and Deutero-Isaiah theory — just because someone has a PhD behind their name does not mean they're right (though their hand-waving arguments sway many). They can teach in seminary, have PhDs, and still be quite wrong (or not even Christian).

Do your own homework. Please. Don't use a translation just because you like the way it reads. Be sure your Bible really is the Word of God.

## Chapter 3

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# Is The Best Bible Personal Preference?

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The Bible translation debate continues to create questions — how do you select a translation? Are they really different? “Most” “scholars” say such a thing, shouldn’t that be good enough?

It’s *not* a personal preference issue. Since the two textual bases differ, at most one is correct (or they’re both wrong) — but they can’t both be right.\* For example, if you say the sky is orange and I say it’s blue, I’m right and you’re wrong. If you say it’s orange and I say it’s purple we’re both wrong.

But we can’t both be right in either case.

It’s not the KJV, it’s Textus Receptus verses the Alexandrian base text. Since Textus Receptus and Alexandrian texts differ, they can’t *both* be correct.

It might surprise you to know seminaries and pastors exist denying the virgin birth, resurrection, return of Jesus, and more. These so-called “modern translations” frequently follow liberal theological ideas as they abandon orthodox Christianity. Westcott-Hort denied the creation and Eden, believed themselves Christs, and more.

Whatever you may think about textual analysis, the Bible translation discussion is most definitely *not* simply personal preference. *All* translations have problems, whether you use KJV, NKJV, NASB or NIV understand *how* your translation came to be, *what* textual base was used, and *why* they translators chose what they did.

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\* Unless, of course, you’re using post-modern philosophy, which denies absolutes, except for the one absolute no absolute truth exists.

## *Chapter 4*

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# **3 Step Bible Translation Review Process**

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Many articles on Bible translation express similar ideas: go to a bookstore and read various translations and pick one you like. In other words, they're all roughly equivalent, and choosing one over the other becomes personal preference.

Unfortunately that's wrong as major differences exist, thus we need a method to find those differences, selecting a translation best expressing the author's original words.

Surprisingly, it's not a difficult process, requiring only 3 steps which might take 15–20 minutes.

## **4.1 Find the Translator's Methods**

Normally the front of your Bible includes a translator preface. Read it and you'll discover the background of the translators, how and why they performed the translation, their statement of faith, and so on.

Hidden in those notes lies the first issue: which text the translators used, as two distinct lines exist:

- Textus Receptus
- Westcott-Hort, UBS, and Nestle-Aland.

Textus Receptus proves superior to the others, for reasons we've already covered.

## 4.2 Check for Missing or Changed Verses

It might surprise you to discover some translations delete verses, or remove words which change the meaning of passages. By always considering the same verses, a quick sense of any translation becomes readily apparent.

- (Matthew 18:11 NKJV) For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.
- (Matthew 18:11 KJV) For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.
- (Matthew 18:11 NIV) deleted

Also Revelation 11:17:

- (Revelation 11:17 NKJV) saying: We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was **and who is to come**, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.
- (Revelation 11:17 KJV) Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, **and art to come**; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.
- (Revelation 11:17 NIV) saying: We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.

Also note Matthew 25:13 (where a deletion turns the verse into nonsense), Mark 2:17 and Acts 8:37.

Westcott-Hort's textual base deletes many verses; some modern translations follow it closely (NIV), while others less (NASB). Examining these verses reveals how much human editing the translators feel God's Word needed in the name of "scholarship."

## 4.3 Determine if it's Literal or Paraphrase

**All translations paraphrase to some extent**, but some take a greater license than others; 2 Timothy 2:15 provides clues to how literally the translator viewed their job. This single verse reveals more than any written preface will.

- KJV — Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
- NIV — Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth

“Rightly divide” translates the Greek *orthotomeo* — similar to a math term *orthogonal* meaning a right angle, carrying the meaning of precision and accuracy. In this case “correctly handles” isn’t too bad, but it’s not as precise.

Instead of “study” the NIV uses “do your best” which changes the meaning and waters down the devotion as study implies dedication, while just doing your best can mean a lot less.

This one verse reveals how the translator views their job. Is it to make a “user friendly” translation, or to accurately and literally translate? Keep in mind a paraphrase isn’t *always* bad, but you *do* need to know when the translator attempted to paraphrase.

## Conclusion

Use these three steps to become familiar with how and why the translators performed their task, and instead of “choosing what you like” you’ll be on your way to understanding how and why various translations came to be, and the bias of the translators.

## Chapter 5

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# Bible Review: ESV

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The ESV pops on the scene as one of the new, hot, translations. But how does it stack up?

### Translator Methods

The ESV begins with the RSV, as the translators say the 1971 RSV text provided the starting point for their work. If you're familiar with the RSV, that statement alone speaks volumes.

Which Greek text forms its foundation? Does it use the text edited by Westcott and Hort? Again, the translators say the ESV is based on the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible as found in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1983), and on the Greek text in the 1993 editions of the Greek New Testament (4<sup>th</sup> corrected ed.), published by the United Bible Societies (UBS), and *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27<sup>th</sup> ed.), edited by Nestle and Aland.

As we've noted, Nestle-Aland and UBS are different names for what remains essentially Westcott and Hort's controversial work. Thus, the ESV's origins are the old RSV, and the Alexandrian (Westcott-Hort) Greek text.

### Missing Verses

Does the ESV follow Westcott and Hort's lead? Some translations — even based on the corrupt Alexandrian Westcott-Hort text — don't follow as much as others (NASB is one example which refuses to delete all the verses Westcott and Hort did).

Let's see how the ESV stacks up.

- (Matthew 18:11 NKJV) For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.
- (Matthew 18:11 ESV) **deleted**

Notice the ESV jumps straight from verse 10 to verse 12. Did you know they deleted verse 11?

- (Revelation 11:17 NKJV) saying: We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was **and who is to come**, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.
- (Revelation 11:17 ESV) saying, “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign.

Whoops. They omitted the “who is to come” part. Those two edits can be debated back and forth (textual criticism), but Westcott-Hort’s text contains edits which clearly make no sense. Unfortunately, the ESV follows their illogical editing as well.

- Matthew 25:13 (ESV) Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.
- Matthew 25:13 (KJV) Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour **wherein the Son of man cometh**.

Watching if you don’t know what time it is makes no sense at all — in this case it’s not a question of which Greek text proves superior, it’s an obvious example of editing God’s Word rendering the text illogical.

It seems the ESV follows Westcott-Hort and their edited text.

## Check Cornerstone Verses

2 Timothy 2:15 is a cornerstone verse, revealing much about *how* a translation views its job. Is it literal, or more of a paraphrase? Wordy, or concise?

- KJV — Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
- ESV — Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.



In line with other recent translations, the ESV waters down “study” to “do your best” (NASB uses “be diligent” which is pretty good).

“A worker who has no need to be ashamed” is a bit wordy, that could be “a worker with no need to be ashamed.” Admittedly that’s a personal issue, but it seems many recent translations chop the text into shorter sentences, creating some strange constructions.

The ESV changes “study” to the three words “do your best” — not only is it watered down in meaning, but it’s wordy where it doesn’t need to be. Is “study” really not clear?

## **Conclusion**

The ESV doesn’t offer much over other recent translations. If you like the RSV, NIV, NRSV, and so on, you’ll like the ESV. For those following the non-corrupt Greek text (KJV, NKJV, and to a lesser extent NASB), you’ll find little to recommend about the ESV.

## Chapter 6

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# Bible Review: HCSB

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The HCSB may not be the popular flavor-of-the-month translation, but it's another example of a modern, easy to read translation.

## Translator Methods

### Philosophy

First to check: *why* they felt a new translation was required, *how* they did it, and *what* they used. From their about page:\*

**WHY** — *English is changing rapidly, and Bible translations must keep pace.* Well, yes and no. We certainly add new words like computer and cell-phone, but for a Bible this doesn't mean much. Of course, if words *change* meaning, that's an issue, but that happens much more slowly.

*Advances in biblical research provide new data for Bible translators.* If you're critical of modern "scholarship" and the critical text (Alexandrian) this again doesn't mean much, and actually could be a *bad* thing.

**HOW** — They call their translation philosophy "optimal equivalence" as opposed to "formal equivalence" (word for word) or "dynamic equivalence" (paraphrase). Optimal equivalence might be the latest buzzword, but carries little actual meaning — It's marketing-speak.

*It means in the HCSB you'll find God's personal name (Yahweh), the use of "Messiah" in the New Testament, the use of "slave" in the New Testament, just to name a few examples*

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\* <http://hcsb.org/about.aspx>

Most Bibles translate Yahweh as LORD (in all caps) to distinguish it from the more general lord meaning ruler. Not a big deal, but since other translations don't normally use Yahweh, you might be surprised about it. It's not necessarily a bad idea, but if you're not familiar with "Christianeze" you might not understand what it is (it's actually YHWH, some call it Yahweh, others Jehovah).

The "slave" presents a bigger issue. They translated the Greek "doulos" as slave — other translations typically use bondsman. It's not a slave in the sense we're used to, the doulos (bondman) chooses to serve their master, and has roots in the Old Testament (Exodus 21).

## Textual Base

They're using the Alexandrian line:

*Using the most up to date critical texts, Nestle-Aland's Novum Testamentum 27<sup>th</sup> ed., the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament 4<sup>th</sup> ed., and Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia 5<sup>th</sup> ed.*

As we've noted, Nestle-Aland and United Bible Societies (UBS) are different names for what remains essentially Westcott and Hort's corrupt work. How much did they follow the Alexandrian's controversial edits? To that question we shall now consider.

## Missing Verses

Does the HCSB follow Westcott and Hort's lead? Let's see how it stacks up. HCSB verses come from My Study Bible web site.

- (Matthew 18:11 NKJV) For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.
- (Matthew 18:11 HCSB) [For the Son of Man has come to save the lost]. (FOOTNOTE: "Other mss omit bracketed text")

Verse 11 appears in the text, but bracketed as missing in some manuscripts (those manuscripts being the corrupt Westcott-Hort or Alexandrian).

- (Revelation 11:17 NKJV) saying: We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.

- (Revelation 11:17 HCSB) saying: We thank You, Lord God, the Almighty, who is and who was, (FOOTNOTE: “Other mss add and who is to come”)

Now we’ve come to a *huge* problem, as *the HCSB translators didn’t tell you what the “other mss” are*. In Matthew 18, the “other mss” are Westcott-Hort, while in Revelation 11, the “other mss” are Textus-Receptus. They’ve preferred one textual line over the other in some places, but neglected to inform the reader which one.

That’s a *B-I-G* problem. Even as I spend considerable time studying Bible translations, I’d be hard pressed to immediately identify which textual line every footnote refers to. It’s a big problem demanding a fix.

- Matthew 25:13 (HCSB) Therefore be alert, because you don’t know either the day or the hour. (FOOTNOTE: “Other mss add in which the Son of Man is coming.”)
- Matthew 25:13 (KJV) Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour **wherein the Son of man cometh**.

Watching if you don’t know the time makes no sense at all — in this case it’s not a question of which Greek text proves superior, it’s an obvious example of editing God’s Word rendering the text illogical.

This is a sad following of the Alexandrian line — would someone tell you to keep watch because you don’t know what time it is? That makes *no* sense at all. You keep watch because you don’t know what time some event will occur (Jesus returns, enemy attacks, time for dinner, someone else takes over the watch, etc).

In this case, “other mss” means Textus-Receptus.

## Check Cornerstone Verses

2 Timothy 2:15 remains a cornerstone verse, revealing much about *how* a translation views its job. Is it literal, or more of a paraphrase? Wordy, or concise?

- KJV — Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
- HCSB — Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who doesn’t need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth.

“Be diligent” is fairly good translation — much preferred over “do your best,” or “work hard.”

“Correctly teaching” isn’t quite right, it’s correctly handling. Teaching might imply this verse is for pastors, but it’s meant for everyone as you must study the Bible yourself.

## Bonus: Ephesians 6

The HCSB seems to be a cross, so to get a admittedly biased idea of style, a passage I’m quite familiar with is Ephesians 6:

*Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by His vast strength. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the tactics[g] of the Devil. 12 For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens. 13 This is why you must take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand. 14 Stand, therefore, with truth like a belt around your waist, righteousness like armor on your chest, 15 and your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace.[h] 16 In every situation take the shield of faith, and with it you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is God’s word.*

Footnote “g” notes “tactics” in the text can also be schemes, or tricks. It would be preferred to put either in the text instead, as “tactics” is a *general* term, while scheme is a specific tactic. In this case they’ve generalized a specific meaning. Why they chose to do that would be an interesting question for the translators, especially when they provide the specific term in a footnote.

Verse 13 says “you must take up,” which implies an order (which it is).

On a personal note we’ll admit we’re quite used to the majestic use of the KJV. Overall this paragraph isn’t too bad.

## Bonus: John 7

*His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that*

*thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world.* John 7:3–4 KJV

*so His brothers said to Him, “Leave here and go to Judea so Your disciples can see Your works that You are doing. For no one does anything in secret while he’s seeking public recognition. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.”*

John 7:3–4 HCSB

*Jesus’ brothers urged him to go to Judea for the celebration. “Go were your followers can see your miracles!” they scoffed. “You can’t become a public figure if you hide like this! If you can do such wonderful things, prove it to the world!”*

John 7:3–4 NLT

In this case, the paraphrased NLT brings out the meaning better — Jesus’ brothers were taunting Him a bit, saying “show your stuff.” In John 7 you might miss that if you haven’t referred to a paraphrase, and the HCSB follows most translations.

In fairness to the HCSB, it’s not their intent to create a paraphrase.

## Conclusion

The text appears well-footnoted with explanations. It seems — similar to the NASB — the HCSB tries to take a middle approach to Westcott-Hort’s edits of the text.

While the HCSB states it’s based on the Westcott-Hort textual line, they do reject some of the silly and absurd changes Westcott and Hort made to the text. Why the HCSB doesn’t just use the preferred Textus-Receptus instead remains a mystery only the translators could answer.

The HCSB appears to surpass the NIV (and most definitely the new 2011 NIV the Southern Baptists rejected) for those looking for a modern-language translation. If you’re in the NIV camp and don’t like the 2011 revised NIV, you might find something to like in the HCSB, if you don’t like the reigning Bible translation champion KJV/NKJV.

The nasty footnote problem must be corrected — that’s a show-stopper for serious use.

## Chapter 7

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# Bible Review: MEV

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Because Bible translation yields high profit for companies, new or updated entries continue to flood the market: ESV, NRSV, HCSB, NIV, and so on. Welcome the newest entry: the MEV, or Modern English Version.

The MEV's claim to fame being instead of the horribly corrupt Westcott-Hort text (also known as UBS or Nestle-Aland), it uses the superior text behind the King James: Textus-Receptus (or the received text), also known as the Majority text.

First, let's consider what they have on their web site: from their review page,\* Hebrews 4:12

*For the word of God is alive, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intents of the heart. (MEV)*

*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (NKJV)*

*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (ESV)*

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\* <http://modernenglishversion.com/comparison/>

Powerful in the NKJV is Strong's 1756\* having the flavor of energy, so powerful provides a reasonable translation.

Both the ESV and MEV miss by translating “active” instead. While not horrible, I can't help but wonder if newer translations change words just to be different. After all, it's a new translation, so it can't read like older ones — even if they're more accurate.

They also highlight Philippians 4:12–13:

*I know both how to face humble circumstances and how to have abundance. Everywhere and in all things I have learned the secret, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things because of Christ who strengthens me. (MEV)*

*I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (NKJV)*

*I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength. (NIV)*

These verses show the MEV taking NKJV words and changing them to those more commonly heard (abased to humble, etc). No tragic mistake here, except for translating “because” instead of “through,” which Strong's<sup>†</sup> notes is a preposition.

Changing the translation not only weakens the text, it changes the grammar — “because” is a conjunction,<sup>‡</sup> not a preposition. An English teacher a long time ago explained prepositions as having a relationship with a box — you can be near, to, above, below, at, through, or many other things spatially relating to a box.

You can't be “because” a box — it's not a preposition.

Leaving grammar aside, a large difference exists between doing something *because* of Christ, and *through* Christ. The first implies you can perform it on your own power, while the second does not.

\* <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=G1756&t=KJV>

† <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=G1722&t=KJV>

‡ <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/2/1/37/>



Knowing what you know about your relationship with God and your ability and His, which do you think makes sense? You don't need to be a Greek or textual scholar to choose.

Why they changed this is mysterious.

### 3 Step Review

The MEV preface notes it uses Textus Receptus, and the King James as the base manuscript. Thus we'd expect it would read quite similar to both the KJV and NKJV. The translators used formal equivalence, meaning as literal as possible while using correct English and grammar.

According to the preface, the original motive for the MEV was to provide military chaplains an easier to use translation than KJV for the troops. It's not clear why they felt the NKJV didn't meet their goals. Perhaps because the chaplains wanted freedom of copyright to do with the text as they wanted — hand out freely, make their own copies when necessary, etc.

If you look at the introduction in your Bible, most have instructions on how and when verses can be published. Commonly, it restricts to no more than 25% of a work, and no more than 50% of a Bible book. Thus, it's impossible to hand out the text of 1 John, for example. It's possible to obtain permission for other uses, but that likely entails payment of fees (one reason my books all use KJV).

I'd guess (and it's only a guess), military chaplains desire to follow all legal and copyright restrictions, but also retain freedom to hand out God's Word as they see fit. Creating their own translation to which they hold copyright enables them to do this.

With the translator's methods and texts out of the way, let's check for deleted or changed verses — Matthew 18:11, Revelation 11:17, Matthew 25:13, and Mark 2:17 all read correctly, as expected by a Textus-Receptus based translation. Now, consider 2 Timothy 2:15 to feel how literal and modern it is.

- KJV — Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
- NKJV – Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

- MEV – Study to show yourself approved by God, a workman who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The MEV retains “study,” far superior to modern usage of “do your best.” It’s a good translation, and quite close to the KJV.

## Bonus: Ephesians 6

Since we’d expect the MEV to be close to the KJV, to get a better example of modern English updates they performed, consider Ephesians 6.

*10 Finally, my brothers, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having your waist girded with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 having your feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace, 16 and above all, taking the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all the fiery arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

Ephesians 6:10–17 MEV

*10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age,[c] against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;*

Ephesians 6:10–17 NKJV

Two changes jump out — wiles changed to schemes, and world to age. Both are reasonable; wiles isn't in common use anymore, and world could mean the physical planet, while the text implies a period of time. In this case, age might be better understood.

## **7.1 Can the MEV Replace the KJV or NKJV?**

How to choose between the NKJV and MEV? If you want minimum updating, and maximum compatibility with KJV, choose the NKJV. If you like the ESV style, but reject the corrupt textual basis, you'll probably prefer the MEV.

I'll spend more time with the MEV, but on initial review it looks to be a solid translation. Of course, it will contain problems (as any translation does), but proves superior to the alphabet soup of new “modern” translations.

If you're used to the KJV, you won't find anything to move you away from the venerated and still undisputed champ — King James.

## Chapter 8

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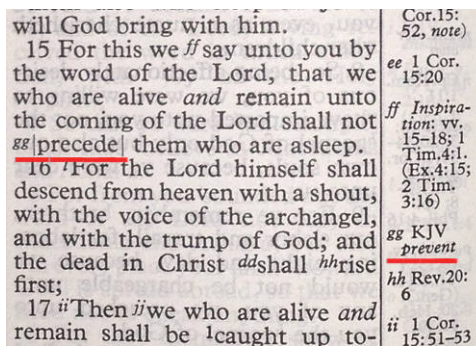
### Bible Review: Scofield III

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The best Bible you can have is a 1967 Scofield Bible for all the reasons discussed earlier — it's Textus-Receptus based, ignoring the corrupt Westcott-Hort (also known as UBS or Nestle-Aland) text. Sadly, it seems to go in and out of print, so what should a discerning Bible student use?

Since the 1967 Scofield isn't always available, I obtained a Scofield III KJV (ISBN 978-0-19-527850-7) to see if it's as good as its predecessor. It's typeset in an easy-to-read style, with nice margins.

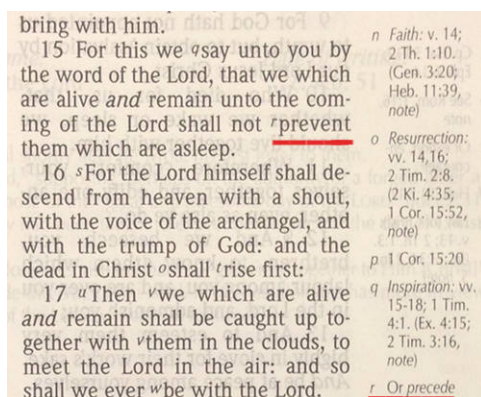
The 1967 makes word changes directly in the text, making it quite easy to read, while clarifying words with changed meaning since 1611. It's easiest to show this with an example, using 1 Thessalonians 4:15. First the 1967 Scofield:



The Greek for precede means come before. Notice vertical bars around *precede* notify you of a language change (with the original

word in the margin) — *prevent* has been changed to *precede*, which is accurate.

But notice the way it appears in the Scofield III:



The 1967 and the Scofield III are reverse — the 1967 makes word changes in the text, while the current Scofield III has them in the margins. For those unfamiliar with Olde English, the 1967 is easier to understand, which is why it's my primary reading and teaching Bible.

When it's unavailable, the Scofield III is the next best, and *far* superior to the alphabet soup (NIV, ESV, RSV, NRSV, HCSB, etc) of the modern, corrupt, translations all based on the Alexandrian Westcott-Hort base. If you don't like the KJV, get a good New King James Bible (NKJV) and it's almost as good as the KJV.

Please remember notes appearing in your Bible are *not* inspired by God, they're no better than any other commentary you might pick up. Many times a note appears at the end of Mark claiming the last few verses don't appear in some manuscripts (the corrupt ones). Just ignore it.

The Scofield KJV Bibles aren't the best because of the study notes, they're the best due to the Bible text itself. I've had people complain about some of the notes in Scofields, and do not recommend it because of notes, rather it's the KJV text and how it's handled.

For some strange reason, the publisher doesn't keep the 1967 Scofield in print, in spite of demand — I've seen them offered for over \$300 on Amazon. I've asked for a reason from the publisher, but have never received a response.

When the 1967 Scofield KJV is in print, it's the best choice, and remains the best KJV Bible. When unavailable, the Scofield III KJV is the next best thing.

## Chapter 9

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# Recommendations

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The best Bible you can have, in order of most preferred to least:

1. 1967 Scofield KJV
2. Scofield III KJV
3. NKJV
4. MEV
5. NASB

The first four are nearly equal, while the NASB falls off a bit. Many people prefer a modern style of English, and the NKJV and MEV provides that, while using the accurate Textus-Receptus base. However, referring to a New Living Paraphrase in some cases helps with meaning. These two translations provide a solid foundation for Bible Study.

Most importantly, understand *all* translations have problems. It's important to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the Bible translation you use. In the event you're using another translation, it does *not* mean to throw it out or stop using it.

You must have balance — no translation is 100% perfect, they *all* have problems. This does not mean errors or inconsistencies exist in the Bible, only translation can never be perfect. It's important to understand how your translation came to be, and what methods were used in its creation. Most importantly, you are encouraged to study on your own.