

History and Authenticity of the Bible
Lesson 19
English Versions

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Let's begin with a word of prayer and ask God's direction.

Father, we thank You so much for Your wonderful word. And thank You, Lord that you have given us the written revelation that's inspired and inerrant in the original autographs. Help us Lord, as we again examine the evidence that we might be good students of the word and hungry to know Your truth. Thank You Lord, for what You're going to do, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Okay. We're talking about the English translations.

English Translations

Wycliffe (1320–1384) • **Tyndale** (1525) • **Coverdale** (1535)

Geneva Bible (1560) • **King James Version** (1611)

English Revised Version (1881-1885)

American Standard Version (1901)

Williams Translation (1937) • **Revised Standard Version** (1952)

Phillips Translation (1958)

Good News for Modern Man (1966) • **The Living Bible** (1971)

New American Standard Bible (1971) • **New International Version** (1978)

The Good News Bible (1979)

New King James Version (1982)

When the King James finished their project, it was a masterpiece. You know there are a lot of students who are exposed to the other side who think that what we're doing here is kind of a King James only type thing and all that. And I hope I've made that clear all along that is not what we're trying to do. But we are concerned about the Greek text that is behind our translations. And it seems to me that if you really did believe the other side of the argument (as I did for years) and

you really did follow it, then you would never want to ignore all the majority manuscripts that are behind the King James text.

See, that always has fascinated me. Why would you choose just a couple of manuscripts and make it the basis of your translation? Wouldn't you want to consider all of it? That's why if you do buy a book in the bookstore to get all of this in one book then get *The Majority Text* by Hodges and Farstadt, the two authors that put it together. And if you're going to get a Greek testament, and it does have a critical apparatus at the bottom that shows you all the manuscript evidence that they knew was catalogued up to that point, so you can make some judgments. But to simply follow an English translation that based itself on a Greek tradition based on only two or three manuscripts, to me is ludicrous. And yet, that's exactly what New American, New International and many of them have done. And I'm sorry they've done it. They're good English translations of the Greek text they used. But it is definitely prejudicial and it is getting us away from the majority of the manuscripts.

Now, when we look at the whole issue of King James, they did a wonderful job—so good that even additional Greek manuscripts, which they did not have available but became available in a hundred years or so following, only confirmed that the King James' dependence on the received Greek text, the *Textus Receptus* was in fact the correct way to go. The very term, *Textus Receptus* as we told you, class, didn't come until A.D. 1633. But it was commonly understood that this was our Greek text. And if you take your trusty computer program, Logos again put up the Greek pack, you can parallel the A.D. 1550 with the later seventeenth century Greek text and you can see that there's no difference. It's primarily the same text.

The changes don't happen until the Westcott/Hort tradition of *Codex Vaticanus* and *Codex Sinaiticus* at the end of the nineteenth century. Well that caused the furor in the English world! Just to kind of give you an update of English. The first edition that was based on this new Greek text was the English Revised Version. And naturally the Americans wanted one, so it

became the American Standard Version of 1901. If you have a New American Standard Bible, it's just an update of the 1901.

In 1937 under the direction of the Moody Bible Institute, we had the Williams translation, completed and named after the man, Charles P. Williams. He followed the Greek text of Westcott and Hort, but for the first time we had a guy trying to translate the thought of the passage. The New International is called a dynamic equivalent translation, meaning they try to put in English an equal thought, not a word-for-word legalistic translation, so to speak.

So in 1937...and by the way, when I was going to school, Williams' paraphrased was everywhere. We all read it and so forth. And it was very popular. It was before the Living Bible and people just thought it was great. When we started having trouble, real serious trouble, was in 1952, the Revised Standard Version came out and the Hebrew word *almah* in [Isaiah 7:14](#) was changed from virgin to young woman. The implications of that, of course, were enormous. Why? At the same time in the early 1950s, we had among the schools of America, especially on the graduate level, a lot of doctrinal heresy—German rationalism, Liberalism. We had an argument at Andover-Newton Theological Seminary that Jesus was the illegitimate child of German mercenary soldier who had sex with Mary. You know, the undermining of the basic doctrines of the Bible was enormous in the 1950s. The whole evangelical world was just up in arms over this Revised Standard Version.

Now a lot of scholars laughed at the fundamentalists for their concern. See, it was the tip of the iceberg. What you need to understand is sometimes a person tries to speak scholarly to you, but is really avoiding that there is a serious problem here. Was there a serious problem among the denominations and seminaries regarding the doctrine of the deity and virgin birth and incarnation of Christ? The answer is, yes, there was. So the smoke screen out here was translating a Hebrew word in [7:14](#). Now there are two other Hebrew words also that could have been used. But they can't refer to a virgin. The only word that you can use that would refer to a virgin is *almah*. The

reason why we knew these translators were wrong is because in [Matthew 1:23](#) when it translated the verse, it used the Greek word *parthenos*, which always means virgin. So, the Greek in the New Testament clarified that the meaning of the Hebrew word was a virgin in [Isaiah 7:14](#).

The reason why I want you to note it is because this started the undermining of what was actually the original text. That somehow we have the freedom to say whatever we wanted to say, all in the name of scholarship. And from then on, things got really rough.

Now in 1958, kind of following up on the tradition of the Williams translation, we had the Phillips. Now the reason why it became popular is that Billy Graham picked it up and offered it as a book offer on his program. And before too long, he was doing it in sections. Like he would give you the Living Epistles or he would give you the Living Gospels or whatever. And this is a number of years before the Living Bible came out. It's the Phillips translation. I still have one and sometimes they really express, in a paraphrase, the beauty of what's in the language. So they are interesting reading.

Well the American Bible Society decided to put out a translation in modern language to communicate to the contemporary generation and also to kind of suppress all the controversy about the Revised Standard. So in 1966, they produced the *Good News for Modern Man*. It's still being sold.

What really became a hit with Bible readers was the Living Bible in 1971. It became the most popular paraphrase ever done. All your little Precious Moments Bibles for kids are usually using the Living Bible translation. It was done by Kenneth Taylor of Tyndale House and it was basically to communicate with his own children. Many, many times the Living Bible does express in our current English what is in the actual text. I have found it to be a lot better in the Old Testament than the New. But he did a great job with the Old Testament. And sometimes, it's interesting reading. But you've got to be careful, remember it's a paraphrase.

So the Williams, the Phillips, the Living Bible, they're all paraphrases, okay. There are others like Weymouth that people will mention, but these are kind of the biggies. The New American Standard Bible was done by the Lockman Foundation in 1971. And they tried to sell this as the update of the King James. This was not an update of the King James. As a matter of fact, they consulted the Westcott-Hort Greek text instead. But they got fifty-four evangelical, fundamental scholars. I was very much involved in this project. Campus Crusade for Christ sold this Bible everywhere. It was an updated version of the 1901. When it actually came to us, when the final editorial committee had their say-so, there was a lot in it that was from Westcott and Hort Greek text rather than the *Textus Receptus*. Even though they said they were going to try to follow the majority view of it.

Well, it was the best thing in English and in the New Testament they kept all the verb forms exactly the same, which was very helpful to English readers. Like if it's a participle, they put *ing* on the end of it—teaching, baptizing, going, they kept consistent throughout the Bible. If it was an imperfect, which is like a continuous action in past tense then they say "they were teaching." It was the first translation ever to do that. So it was extremely helpful and a lot of university students really went for this because it did help explain some of the Greek grammar. And I guess in a certain sense it wasn't that bad, but more and more as we look at what was actually the product, we realize that they had succumbed to following the Greek text of Westcott and Hort a lot more than they did the *Textus Receptus*. But they even tried to sell it on the basis of the number of men involved. They got fifty-four just like the King James, but unlike the King James they did not all meet together for hours of prayer. Nor did they check and recheck; nor did every man submit his copies to everybody else, but rather to a central committee who had a lot of power.

Now some of the men involved in this project are some of the greatest fundamental men of this century, some of whom have already died and some of whom were my teachers and I

respect them greatly. So the New American Standard Bible was a worthy project, but it got a little confused. And that will always happen when you get scholars together who are trying to put together a Greek text and they don't want to make a decision between the two traditions, so they're going to just kind of make judgments. But sometimes somebody higher up calls the shots and whatever good work people have done is changed. That happened frequently.

Then we have The Good News Bible in 1979 and that's still a good seller. It was originally called *The Bible in Today's English Version*. It's the United Bible Society's, which was committed to the Westcott-Hort tradition and also had a lot of Catholic influence. They began to use this. Now their stated goal was not to follow traditional vocabularies and styles in other versions, but to present the message in every day natural English. And I think they did a good job with that. There's just one problem, when you match the Greek text behind what they're saying, there's too much difference. So you don't know what the word of God is or isn't.

Now the next major project, which was indeed a critical one in terms of this whole subject of our Bible, was the New King James, 1982. Now this is a reaction to the others—to New International and New American. They say, wait a minute they've been using the Greek text of Westcott and Hort. Let's don't do that, let's go back to the *Textus Receptus*. Let's just update the King James, get rid of the archaic words, change the *ye* and *thee* to just you, and make it easy to read.

However, when the final committee made the decisions, they made more extensive changes than they should have. One very important one [change] comes right away in the book of Genesis and that was that the word for seed was translated descendants. Now the word seed can refer to descendants and sometimes it does mean that. But we know from Paul's argument in Galatians 3 that the prophecy related to how the seed will bless all nations of the world is not talking about seeds as of many, but as of one, Christ the Messiah. They said that it was a natural rendering of the word. Now this is an example where both sides are correct. Is it a natural

rendering of the word seed to say you are descendants? Yes. But it's like the word fish. Is it one fish or is it two or more that you are talking about when you say fish? It's what we call generic terms that can refer to either singular or plural. That's the way the Hebrew word is for seed.

Here's another one, *Elohim*. It's actually a plural form in grammar, but it can refer to singular—God is one, or plural—pagan gods. So there are a lot of words like that in every language. We have them in ours, in English. And that's what the word *seed* was. So, are they right in saying it's natural to translate it descendants? Yes. But are they wrong in doing that in the book of Genesis when it refers to the seed blessing all nations of the world? The answer is yes. They're wrong. Why?—because Galatians 3 clarifies the argument. Jewish people wouldn't care. You understand? Because they don't believe the seed in [Genesis 3:15](#) of the woman is referring to the Messiah. They believe it's referring to the Jewish people. So they would be delighted with the translation, descendants.

But overall the New King James did a good job and I wouldn't quibble. It does follow the Greek text behind the King James. And I wouldn't quibble with the New King James. If it's easier to read, fine.

The same things that I was saying about New American Standard would be said about NIV. See, the NIV chose a different principle than New American Standard. If you gave me New American Standard and NIV to evaluate and tell you what I believe—and I have done quite a bit of research on this—one, if you're asking me to read in the New Testament, I'll take New American every time. They follow the Greek grammatical endings, all of that sort of thing. If you're asking me to go to the Old Testament, I'll pick NIV every time. Why?—because the dynamic equivalent that is trying to express the thought is easier in Hebrew than it is in Greek. Greek is a mathematical, teachers' language. Hebrew is one of our romantic poetic languages. It's very flexible, so dynamic equivalent goes good with that.

Let's take a beautiful Hebrew word like *chesed*. The interesting thing to me is that that word which is translated lovingkindness or mercies in the King James Old Testament. That Hebrew word with New International was totally removed from the concept of lovingkindness. They didn't do a bad job. They translated it with unfailing love and that's not bad because behind *chesed* there is certainly faithfulness. It's part of the meaning of the word, but it's a broad, expansive word. And so the New International really felt like unfailing love says more than lovingkindness. What it does is it drops the mercy concept out of the word. I'm not trying to be overly technical here. But class, in *chesed* there is a lot of mercy, a lot of compassion. It's like removing the kindness, compassionate side of the word to say unfailing love. Their answer would be, well the word love itself should say that. But, I believe the King James is proper in some context to say, "tender mercies," which it does many times in the Psalms in translating *chesed* because other words for mercy or compassion are in the text which would show that.

Let me give you an example, [Lamentations 3:22](#). "It is of the Lord's mercies [*chesed* or unfailing love, or lovingkindness] that we are not consumed because His compassions fail not." This is another word. So, you see, I know that the King James did a proper thing in saying it is of the Lord's mercies that we're not consumed, because in the same parallelism of that passage it says "because His compassions fail not." So the compassion (mercy side of the word) was definitely being introduced in that context. Am I making sense? Okay.

When translators make these decisions, they've got reasons for them. Now the interesting thing about the New American Standard that I feel doesn't really express the beauty of Hebrew as it should; yet, they chose lovingkindness to be more consistent for the word. Because the New American wanted to have English readers not having several English words for one Greek word or one Hebrew word, they wanted to have a similar one. So their usage of lovingkindness is like twice as much as even the King James. That's because the principle behind the New American was to get consistency of translations—make sure it's the same in all the passages. That's why I

still like King James and New King James because it isn't just being consistent that rules the day. It's whether the context determines that is the meaning that should be delivered for that word. Because Hebrew, especially in the Old Testament, has a lot of possibilities; so the context sometimes determines which (among the possibilities) is the one that should be there. There are just a lot of problems here and I don't want to make it more difficult.

The key about the Westcott and Hort text, the changes they made in the late 1800's based on that, from the majority of manuscripts are too great to ignore. That's the bottom line. These changes were based on two manuscripts—*Codex Vaticanus*, *Codex Sinaiticus*. They also throw in a third, *Codex Alexandrinus*. They are not the best. They are not the oldest. They are not the most accurate. And they add so many marginal notes in modern English translations that try to tell us it really isn't the truth.

But the truth is that the Greek text used for producing the King James Version is still the most reliable and is based by and large on the majority of manuscripts. May God give us all the wisdom we need to evaluate these matters and the kindness of the Lord towards those who may disagree because there are many who disagree.

The simple facts: one, the King James translation has the fewest multi-syllabic words. So that's why it is easy for little kids to memorize. One of the things that the Bible publishing companies are thinking about now is they're asking the question...and I want you to think about this question...why is it that the children of this evangelical generation are not memorizing these new Bible translations like they once did with King James? I just want you to think about that. There's been a dramatic drop in the memorization of verses by children.

And I'm kind of a bear for memorizing Scripture. I know that. But do you realize (those of you who want to go into ministry) what a blessing this is? You need to learn the word of God, so you get familiar with God's word, so people ask you a question and you may not know the exact passage, but you know pretty generally where that is. Memorizing God's word is so

important to your life. And it saddens me to see kids growing up in good Christian families who are not memorizing God's word any more.

Now if you came out of secular culture or a background that wasn't into that, I mean, you're not to be blamed for that of course. But let's be smart as students and ask why? Is it just because the parents were more disciplined then? Is it just because they rewarded them? I have not been able to prove that either for my own sake or for anyone else's.

Is there a possibility that the multiple translations in a given congregation have added to this problem? And I say yes! For instance, if the child has bought or if the parents buy him a Precious Moments Living Bible and the parents are using King James or New American, they themselves will not be as active in memorizing. In our home, we had a verse to memorize every week as well. And I put them on little verse cards and we'd pass them around the table. And every morning we'd go over our verse. And then we'd cross out a word and see if we could still say it. Cross out three or four and we had memorized one verse.

A few years ago I did a TV production for a company on a given number of pastors and they wanted the children of these pastors who were grown children, to come in and comment on what it was like to grow up in a pastor's home. I was very interested because, you know, you want to hear what your kids had to say. But my kids, all three of them, said that the thing they remembered the most are the devotions around the table. Out of all the things that we did, that's what they remember. I'm not trying to overload you or trying to use this to prove the King James. I'm trying to analyze, why is it that we don't learn God's word as we once did?

Now see, today we don't want to be exposed like that. And these things have just been mushrooming, the multiple translations, and nobody knows which ones to follow. The fact that parents don't insist that their kids learn the word of God anymore...there's something wrong! I'd like to pray and believe that some of you will have a greater commitment to God's word and be more dedicated to learning it than we have seen in the past generation. It's been very poor.

I find people who have known the Lord twenty and twenty-five years have a crisis. I visit them in the hospital and they can't remember the basic verses. And they've sat in church year after year after year after year. It astounds me. I know it exists. I don't try to expose them or make them uncomfortable or anything like that. But it just startles me. I think, what have we been doing? This is the word of God. We need to know the Book.

All right, anyway...I have a pastor friend of mine. It's a wonderful story. He was a high school drop out, into drug—all that had messed up his life. He was the kind who said it doesn't matter. He was on fire for God and he's really going to go after it. And you know that lasted for a while and he ran out of gas. He wanted to know what to do. And I said, "Listen, you can do this."

He said "I can't even learn English much less Greek. I never even learned English.

I said, "You can learn English if you wanted to. You can either do it on your own or you can go back to high school. Adult programs are in every city in America and you can learn English and start all over again." Well, I say that to a lot of guys and they don't listen. This guy listened. He went back. He not only learned English, he learned Greek. He got a hunger for Hebrew. And the guy just kept going and going. Today, that guy is very articulate and eloquent. It's hard to believe!

If you want to do something about it there are plenty of ways to do it. And the reason why we don't understand our Bibles well when we get out in the ministry and want to preach, is because we've never been trained grammatically even in our own language, let alone the language of the Bible. And so we don't think logically. We don't think mathematically. We don't think in order and sequence. And that's some of the problem too.

I also believe that the parents stopped asking their kids to do anything. They didn't discipline them. Don't you understand what's happening? Because all of you have different testimonies of how you bombed out or went here or went there or came from this country or that place or that culture and God brought you all here. And I say thank God for whatever those

parents did, because it got you here, whether you know it or not! That was one of the things that the Lord used in His marvelous plan.

Well, as long as I live, I shall continue to follow what God says.

Hey, take a break. See you in a few minutes.