

Q. What Bible translation or version do you use? What Bible help do you recommend?

A. The Bible version I use most commonly in our publications and on this website is the King James Version (also called the Authorized Version).

Before continuing, I want to point out that I am not "King James only." Among the beliefs held by "King James Version only" supporters are the belief that the King James Version, and only the King James Version, is word-for-word the divinely inspired Word of God, and that no other versions or translations, including the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts are; the belief that there are no textual problems in the King James Version; the belief that all other versions are the work of Satan; that those who use other versions or translations are in danger of hell fire; and the belief that those who disagree with King James Version onlyism are apostate or heretics. This is cultism, pure and simple.

I use the King James Version because it is the most widely owned English-language Bible, it is still unmatched in literary beauty and grace, and it is at least as accurate as other translations.

On the other hand, the King James Version has its problems. William Tyndale, Myles Coverdale, and others risked their lives to translate the Bible into English to produce a Bible in the language of the common people. I don't know too many people now who go around speaking like the King James Version. The King James Version is no longer in the language of the common people. King James onlyists are actually working against the very reason the Bible was published in the English language in the first place!

In fact, the King James Version was never in the language of the common people, who for many years after its publication continued to prefer the Geneva Bible. The King James Version was in the oratory language of the High Church pulpit.

And that brings us to another problem. The King James Version was "fixed." What I mean is that "the King gave the translators instructions designed to guarantee that the new version would conform to the ecclesiology of the Church of England. Certain Greek and Hebrew words were to be translated in a manner that reflected the traditional usage of the church. For example, old ecclesiastical words such as the word 'church' were to be retained and not to be translated as 'congregation'. The new translation would reflect the episcopal structure of the Church of England and traditional beliefs about an ordained clergy" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Authorized_King_James_Version).

The King James Version's purposeful mistranslation of the Greek *ekklēsia* as "church" has ever since perpetuated a distorted view of Jesus Christ's *ekklēsia*. What Jesus intended as His body of called out people, gathered from all around the earth—the "four winds" (Matthew 24:31), is instead seen as an institution that meets in edifices. Similar problems occur where the English words "bishop," "deacon," "pastor," "office," "ordain," and "rule" appear in the King James Version. In fact, there are many such problems, and, Lord willing, I will write a full article on this subject. Unfortunately, most modern translations of the Bible follow in the King James Version's footsteps and continue to mistranslate many of these words.

There is a long-running controversy over which Greek text-type is most accurate. The King James Version is based on the Textus Receptus, which is compiled from a very few manuscripts that date from the twelfth century or later. The Majority Text is compiled from the largest number of surviving manuscripts, but only few English translations are based on it. Most modern English translations of the Bible are based on the text that is found in the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament (N) and in the United Bible Society's third edition (U). This text is often referred to as the NU-Text. This text generally represents the Alexandrian or Egyptian type text of a relative few manuscripts found in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Those who advocate the use of these manuscripts do so because these manuscripts are older than the majority of manuscripts. The Textus Receptus and the Majority Text are more similar to each other than they are to the Alexandrian text-type. Yet, they differ from each other in 1,838 readings! It must also be pointed out that the Textus Receptus, the Alexandrian text-type, and the Byzantine text-type are 85% identical! My personal belief is that, although I prefer the Majority Text, far more errors are found in English translations because of poor translation from the Greek into the English than because of which text-form the English is based on.

I have and use many English translations. Those that I use regularly include the *New King James Version* and *Modern King James Version*. Both of these are based on the Textus Receptus. They read fairly well, and may be good choices for those who have trouble with the seventeenth-century language of the King James Version. English readers may also benefit from the *Literal Version of the Holy Bible* translated by Jay P. Green (translated from the Textus Receptus). This version is now called the *KJ3*. Another choice, this time translated from the Majority Text, is the *Analytical-Literal Translation of the New Testament of the Holy Bible* translated by Gary F. Zeolla. Because they are such literal translations, these latter two Bibles do not read well in English, but they can be useful for in-depth Bible study.

Another translation that I think you will find eye-opening is *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation* by Kenneth S. Wuest. It can really give you a feel for what the writers of the New Testament were actually saying in the Greek. It uses as many English words as necessary to bring out the full meaning of each Greek word.

The truth of the matter is that there is no perfect English translation of the Bible and probably never will be. Nevertheless, I believe there is room for great improvement. The real answer is that each Christian must take it upon him- or herself to actually start studying, not just reading, the Bible. This means that they must become at least somewhat familiar with the original languages. Never before in history has this been easier. I cannot recommend highly enough a free Bible study software for your computer called e-Sword (<http://www.e-sword.net>). It is incredibly feature rich. When you download the basic program, you will also get the King James Version, the King James Version with Strong's numbers (KJV+), and *Strong's Bible Dictionary*. With just this basic setup, you will be able to click on the English words in the KJV+ and instantly see the words in the original languages in *Strong's*. But you can also add other dictionaries, such as *Brown-Driver-Briggs' Hebrew Definitions* and *Thayer's Greek Definitions*. From the available commentaries, I highly recommend that you also add *Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament* and *Vincent's Word Studies*. So far, everything I have mentioned concerning e-Sword, plus much, much more is absolutely free.

So you have no excuse. Stop thinking that you are being spiritually fed because you are sitting in a pew once or twice a week while someone pours his predigested, preconceived notions of what he thinks the Bible says into your head. Let's grow the *ekklēsia* Jesus is building by learning what the Bible really says through feeding directly on His Word!

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