

How Bible Translators Shape Your Theology

[This is a technical article]

It has been adamantly and often said (and written) that the many differences in the ancient texts that are used to translate the Bible into English do not alter any church doctrine. That may be so in relation to the BIG doctrines, but there is a more important issue that needs to be dealt with for the safety of believers. For those who view the Bible as “the Word of God” everything in it is sacred, so to them, whatever each verse states is regarded as a directive from God himself and is immutable.

These evangelical Christians, which includes Charismatics and Pentecostals, base their lives on what every verse in the Bible conveys. This creates a problem for them because they believe, do and say what their English Bibles state, even if it was not what the ancient writer originally intended. This may not seem an immense problem to the average Christian, but earnest evangelicals run their lives by what the Bible says or by what their Bible teachers teach them. This impacts their family, the way they do business, how they relate to non-believers, what food they eat, what religious activities and ceremonies they involve themselves in, etc. In short, the Bible is their guide to life and truth, not Holy Spirit.

I know personally that textual variations in the Bible do cause theological problems for evangelicals, for two reasons: (1) I used to be one such evangelical Christian; & (2) Today I hear evangelical Christians adamantly quote verses from a specific translation to justify a particular belief, while oblivious to the dilemma of what the original writer was really stating.

Here’s an example of how a textual variation changes a person’s theology. In many modern Bibles Mark 16:9-20 is either missing or is only included as a note. The NKJV footnote states that the verses were “not in the original text. They are lacking in Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, although nearly all other mss¹. of Mark contain them”. This means that any spiritual principles derived from those verses are considered by many modern Bible teachers as not ‘the Word of God’.

So, what doctrines only come from these verses and nowhere else in the Bible? Here’s five:

1. We are to preach the gospel to every creature (v:15)
2. You need to be baptised to be saved (v:16)
3. Signs will follow all believers (v:17-18)
4. We can drink poison and not be killed (v:18)
5. We can be bitten by snakes and not die (v:18)

Whether or not these verses are in the Bible will determine whether evangelicals will accept them and live by them.

The second main issue causing evangelicals to have problems is the differences in translation of many, many verses in English Bibles. Depending on the version chosen will determine much of the type of theology a person subscribes to.

To understand this problem, take this verse as an example:

Philippians 3:9 (New King James Version) – *and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;*

Philippians 3:9 (New English Translation) – *and be found in him, not because I have my own righteousness derived from the law, but because I have the righteousness that comes by way of Christ’s faithfulness[a]—a righteousness from God that is in fact[b] based on Christ’s[c] faithfulness.*

1 – Shorthand for ‘Manuscripts’

There's a huge difference between these 2 translations. In fact, they make opposing statements.

- The NKJV states (as do most other English translations) that it's our faith that's operating.
- In opposition, the NET translation makes it clear that it's Christ's (Jesus') faith that's in operation.

Why can Bibles publish completely different views? It's because the translators have to make a decision on what English words they use to replace Greek/Hebrew words, phrases and sentences. This is because syntax and grammar are involved in any translation into English. It's also important to note that translators consider their choice as the most suitable one.

So, which one of these 2 translations of Philippians 3:9 is correct? (*The box below is a quote that explains the reason for the NET translation.*)

[a] "Or 'faith in Christ'. A decision is difficult here. Though traditionally translated "faith in Jesus Christ," an increasing number of NT scholars are arguing that πίστις Χριστοῦ (*pistis Christou*) and similar phrases in Paul (here and in Rom 3:22, 26; Gal 2:16, 20; 3:22; Eph 3:12) involve a *subjective* genitive and mean "Christ's faith" or "Christ's faithfulness" (cf., e.g., G. Howard, "The 'Faith of Christ'," *ExpTim* 85 [1974]: 212-15; R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ* [SBLDS]; Morna D. Hooker, "Πίστις Χριστοῦ," *NTS* 35 [1989]: 321-42). Noteworthy among the arguments for the subjective genitive view is that when πίστις takes a personal genitive it is almost never an objective genitive (cf. Matt 9:2, 22, 29; Mark 2:5; 5:34; 10:52; Luke 5:20; 7:50; 8:25, 48; 17:19; 18:42; 22:32; Rom 1:8; 12; 3:3; 4:5, 12, 16; 1 Cor 2:5; 15:14, 17; 2 Cor 10:15; Phil 2:17; Col 1:4; 2:5; 1 Thess 1:8; 3:2, 5, 10; 2 Thess 1:3; Titus 1:1; Phlm 6; 1 Pet 1:9, 21; 2 Pet 1:5). On the other hand, the *objective* genitive view has its adherents: A. Hultgren, "The *Pistis Christou* Formulations in Paul," *NovT* 22 (1980): 248-63; J. D. G. Dunn, "Once More, ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ," *SBL Seminar Papers, 1991*, 730-44. Most commentaries on Romans and Galatians usually side with the objective view. **sn** *ExSyn* 116, which notes that the grammar is not decisive, nevertheless suggests that "the faith/faithfulness of Christ is not a denial of faith *in* Christ as a Pauline concept (for the idea is expressed in many of the same contexts, only with the verb πιστεύω rather than the noun), but implies that the object of faith is a worthy object, for he himself is faithful." Though Paul elsewhere teaches justification by faith, this presupposes that the *object* of our faith is reliable and worthy of such faith."²

[b] "The words "in fact" are supplied because of English style, picking up the force of the Greek article with πίστει (*pistei*). See also the following note on the word "Christ's"."³

[c] "Grk "based on the faithfulness." The article before πίστει (*pistei*) is taken as anaphoric, looking back to διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ (*dia pisteōs Christou*); hence, "Christ's" is implied."⁴

The answer to the question: No one knows. However, the ramifications in the lives of evangelicals is vastly different depending on which translation they choose to accept.

Even theologians are at odds as to which of these is what Christians need to adhere to. For example:

"Disagreement among scholars continues on whether πίστις Χριστοῦ in Paul be understood as an objective genitive ("faith in Christ") or subjective genitive ("faithfulness of Christ/Christ's faithfulness"). The number of Pauline passages affected by the phrase is relatively small (Gal 2:16; 3:22; Rom 3.22, 26; Phil 3.9; cf. Eph 3:12, though other texts are implicated as well: e.g., Rom 1:17; 3:26, 30; 10:11; Gal 2:20; 3:11). The rendition decided on, we are told, may result in some far reaching consequences due to the centrality of Christ in relation to Christian faith and theology, and the necessity of faith for obtaining righteousness/justification. The debate is nothing new, but a growing number of publications in the last several decades exhibits its power to provoke responses, and despite vigorous and forceful arguments on both side, the problem remains very much an unsettled issue."⁵

2 – www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+3:9&version=NET

3 – www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+3:9&version=NET

4 – www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+3:9&version=NET

5 – B.J. Oropeza (March 2019) "Justification through faith in Christ or faithfulness of Christ? Updating the πίστις Χριστοῦ Debate in Light of Paul's Use of Scripture"

www.academia.edu/38609613/

[Justification through faith in Christ or faithfulness of Christ Updating the πίστις Χριστοῦ Debate in Light of Pauls Use of Scripture](http://www.academia.edu/38609613/Justification_through_faith_in_Christ_or_faithfulness_of_Christ_Updating_the_πίστις_Χριστοῦ_Debate_in_Light_of_Pauls_Use_of_Scripture)

The meaning of words are not the only problem in translation into English. For example:

Greek texts⁶ –

1. Had no spaces between words
2. Had no paragraphs
3. Had no parenthesis
4. Had no punctuation marks
5. Had no inverted commas
6. Were written entirely in capital letters

Biblical Hebrew had no formal punctuation, no capitals, and variable word order. So:

“Consequently, a Hebrew translator cannot always easily determine if a word is a proper name or if it belongs to the ending of one phrase or the beginning of the next. Deciding where one sentence ends and another begins can be difficult, particularly since Hebrew uses ‘and’ much more frequently and differently than English. Translators have to decide where the breaks are in the text, and then how to represent that in the target language. James Kugel provides one example from Genesis 22:8: “Since biblical Hebrew was originally written without punctuation marks or even capital letters marking the beginnings of sentences, Abraham’s answer to Isaac could actually be read as two sentences: ‘God Himself will provide. The lamb for the burnt offering [is] my son.’ (Note that Hebrew does not use ‘to be’ in the present tense; thus, this last sentence would be the same whether or not the word ‘is’ is supplied in translation.)””⁷

Hebrew doesn’t use grammar to indicate past, present or future tense. On the other hand, English makes use of words to indicate tense and also mood. English shows these either by the verb used (e.g. ‘eat’ versus ‘ate’, ‘run’ versus ‘ran’) or by using a supportive word (‘he will work’ versus ‘he did work’). Hebrew is not as explicit because it uses syntax or word order instead. This means that translators need to decide what the Hebrew means and then how to convert it into English. This problem with tense explains why translations of the same verse can use either past tense, future tense or present tense. Here is an extreme example:

Isaiah 9:6 (KJV) – *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*

Isaiah 9:6 (NRSV⁸) – *For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Isaiah 9:6 (NASB⁹) – *For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.*

Isaiah 9:6 (TPT¹⁰) – *A child has been born for us; a son has been given to us. The responsibility of complete dominion will rest on his shoulders, and his name will be: The Wonderful One! The Extraordinary Strategist! The Mighty God! The Father of Eternity! The Prince of Peace!*

No wonder there is such a variety in translations from the same ancient documents. Of course this only compounds the problem of having many manuscripts with varying text to translate from.

On top of these issues, William White (Jr.) informs us that there are 3 different methods of translating ancient texts into our English Bibles. (See his notes in the box on the next page.)

6 – George Berry (1897) “Interlinear Greek-English New Testament” Baker House reprint 1984 p:ii-iii

7 – Ben Spackman (2014) “Why Bible Translations Differ: A Guide for the Perplexed” [“Religious Educator” VOL. 15 NO. 1] p:34
www.academia.edu/6104308/Draft_Why_Bible_Translations_Differ_A_Guide_for_the_Perplexed [draft]

8 – New Revised Standard Version

9 – New American Standard Bible

10 – The Passion Translation

1. **The Direct Equivalence Method.** This method assumes that one will find only one English word to represent each Hebrew word that appears in the Old Testament text. Since some Hebrew words have no one-word equivalent in English, they are simply transliterated (turned into English letters). In this case, the reader must be taught what the transliterated term really meant. This method was used in the earliest translations of the New Testament, which attempted to bring the Latin equivalents of Greek words directly into English. This is how our early English versions adopted a large amount of Latin theological terminology, such as justification, sanctification, and concupiscence.
2. **The Historico-Linguistic Method.** This method attempts to find a limited number of English terms that will adequately express the meaning of a particular Hebrew term. A scholar using this method studies the historical record of how the word has been used and gives preference to its most frequent meaning in context. This method has been used in preparing the Expository Dictionary
3. **The Dynamic Equivalence Method.** This method does not attempt to make any consistent use of an English word for a specific Hebrew word. Instead it endeavors to show the thrust or emphasis of a Hebrew word in each specific context. Thus it allows a very free, colloquial rendering of Old Testament passages. This enables lay readers to get the real kernel of meaning from a particular passage, but it makes Bible word study virtually impossible. For example, a comparison of the concordance for The Living Bible and the concordance for the RSV will show the difference in methods of translation. The RSV actually uses fewer different words than the KJV to translate the Hebrew Old Testament. The Living Bible uses many more specific words to reflect the subtle shades of meaning in the Hebrew text, thus making it impossible to trace how a particular Hebrew word has been used in different contexts. ¹¹

This diversity in the way translation is done further adds to the complexity of evangelicals’ understanding of what God is really saying through the Bible. Why? Because each of these methods creates a very different English Bible.

Here’s an example of how an interpretation can greatly affect a person’s attitude to their life in God.

Psalm 23:3 (NKJV) – *He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.*

Psalm 23:3 (NIV) – *he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake.*

Psalm 23:3 (CEB¹²) – *he keeps me alive. He guides me in proper paths for the sake of his good name.*

Psalm 23:3 (NLV¹³) – *He makes me strong again. He leads me in the way of living right with Himself which brings honor to His name.*

What was the psalmist really trying to say? Well, for the reader, they will believe what ever is written in the translation they read. This of course is irrelevant at the foundational level, because it’s what the writer was wanting to say that it correct, not what translation a reader believes is true. As one researcher puts it:

“There are various interpretations of נַחֲנִי בַמַּגְעֵלִי צְדָקָה (Psalm. 23.3b). Does it profess confidence in YHWH’s guidance of his people to live morally, his righteous treatment of them, his ensuring their prosperity, or some combination of these?” ¹⁴

EXAMPLE #2: Have you ever pondered God’s curse on the Nachash who tempted Eve in the garden east of Eden, or have you just read-over it? Let me remind you of it and then point out a problem:

Genesis 3:15 (NKJV) – *And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”*

11 – The Introduction to W.E. Vine (1940) “W.E. Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words” [without copyright] p:xvii

12 – Common English Bible

13 – New Life Version

14 – Andrew T. Abernethy “‘Right Paths’and/or‘Paths of Righteousness’? Examining Psalm 23.3b within the Psalter”

www.academia.edu/11770946/

[Right Paths and or Paths of Righteousness Examining Psalm 23.3b within the Psalter. Journal for the Study of the Old Testame nt 39.3 2015 299 318](http://www.academia.edu/11770946/Right_Paths_and_or_Paths_of_Righteousness_Examining_Psalm_23.3b_within_the_Psalter_Journal_for_the_Study_of_the_Old_Testament_39.3_2015_299_318)

Why ‘bruise’? If it’s referring to the work of Messiah, why does the curse refer to bruising the enemy when we know Jesus totally defeated him?

The reason is the translator’s choice of words to exchange for a Hebrew word. Interestingly the Hebrew word translated as ‘bruise’ can also be translated as ‘to overwhelm’, ‘break’, or ‘crush’.¹⁵ So why was ‘bruise’ chosen? That’s the translator’s choice based on their theology and worldview.

The NIV uses the more powerful words in its translation:

Genesis 3:15 (NIV) – *And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*”

The ancient Targum (the Aramaic translation of the OT) uses ‘strike’ rather than ‘bruise’ which is more in line with the result of the curse as it played out with Jesus in the 1st century AD. Paul uses ‘crush’ when he makes a parallel statement in Romans about what God is able to do to Satan now that Jesus has had the victory over him.

The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT created by 70 Hebrew scribes in the 3rd century BC)¹⁶, uses a weird translation of the curse: “He will give heed to your head, and you will give heed to his heel”¹⁷. Confused?

Here is a quote from a paper on this very topic:

“The Hebrew text of Genesis 3:15 employs the verb רָחַץ (“to bruise”), which only occurs in two other passages (Psalm 139:11; Job 9:17). The verb רָחַץ is more common in Aramaic in either the sense “to blow” or the sense “to rub off”. It is no surprise, then, that the Targums find another word, but it is remarkable that the word chosen does not mean “to bruise”. It is rather רָחַץ (“to strike”). The source of this choice is not difficult to trace. The ancient poem of Genesis 3:14-19 shares a common theme with other relatively ancient poems in the Hebrew Bible – that of striking the head of the enemy. Numbers 24:17 says that the star from Jacob, the scepter from Israel, will strike (רָחַץ) the forehead of Moab. Judges 5:26 says that Jael smashed the head of Sisera; she struck (רָחַץ) and pierced the temple of his head. Habakkuk 3:13 says that the LORD goes out for the salvation of his people with his Messiah and strikes (רָחַץ) the head of the house of the wicked. In Psalm 68:22 (English v.21), God strikes (רָחַץ) the head of his enemies (cf. Psalm 110:6).

Paul picks up this theme in Romans 16:20 where he says, “The God of peace will crush (συντρίψει) Satan under your feet with haste”. According to Hatch and Redpath, the verb συντρίβω never translates רָחַץ in the Septuagint. Nevertheless, Paul’s allusion to Genesis 3:15 is unmistakable. The ending of Romans is riddled with textual difficulties, but the evidence appears to favor the inclusion of “The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you” in Romans 16:20. This comes across as somewhat of a premature conclusion to the epistle, but it fits well with the targumic understanding of Genesis 3:15. Both Paul and the Palestinian Targum tradition associate the defeat of the enemy and the deliverance of God’s people with the time of the Messiah. For Paul, the Messiah is none other than the Lord Jesus.”¹⁸

Let’s now take a look at the major church doctrine of justification (being made righteous by God) and see how the various translators impact this tenet for Christians. The doctrine of ‘justification by faith’ was essentially put forward by the apostle Paul as he outlined it in Galatians and Romans. The reason for the choice to investigate this is that there has been a number of major shifts in the interpretation of Paul’s use of words based on δικαι (‘right’) since the 1st century AD – i.e. δικαιοσύνη , δικαιοῦν , δικαίος , δικαίωμα , δικαίωσις , δικαιοκρισία .

15 – www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Lexicon.show/ID/H7779/shuwph.htm

16 - The Septuagint has undergone alterations by Jewish scribes up until the 4th century AD.

17 – $\text{αὐτός σου τηρήσει κεφαλὴν καὶ σὺ τηρήσεις αὐτοῦ πτέρναν}$

18 – Issa Diab (2014) “Paul’s Use of the Targum” (www.academia.edu/7900332/Pauls_Use_of_the_Targum)

These shifts were significant changes for Christians over the centuries, as Richard Moore notes:

*“Beginning with the Lollard versions of the fourteenth century, the six words of the key word-family at the heart of Paul’s doctrine of justification came to be represented by two English word-families. William Tyndale also used this pattern for his 1526 New Testament, and so provided the model for the King James Version (1611), the English Bible par excellence for over three hundred and fifty years. With the Reformation this two word-family approach became linked with the Protestants’ forensic model of justification. In the nineteenth century an alternative view was developed: the relational model. It was first represented in English New Testaments in the first half of the twentieth century. Characterized by the use of a single English word-family (for the single Greek word-family), it became quite influential in the last third of the twentieth century, being the preferred model of the mainstream Bible Societies in the USA and Britain. However, by the twenty-first century it had virtually disappeared from those English Bible versions that are in common use.”*¹⁹

The issue of righteousness for us is this: What is the sense of God’s righteousness that we have under the New Covenant? This is an important question because it affects how we relate to and understand the Trinity. It’s also a major tenet of the church, so it is very important to understand it from Heaven’s perspective.

Translators have used various expressions for our righteousness (also called justification) which stem from their understanding of how God works, not from what the NT stated in the Greek. They use either:

- ‘Justified’ (a religious term),
- ‘made righteous’ (a forensic legal term – based on judgement),
- ‘uprightness’ (a forensic legal term – based on judgement),
- ‘set right with God’ (a relational term) or
- ‘right standing’²⁰ (a relational term).

Here’s an example of the range of readings about our righteousness, starting from the religious, then the legal and finally the relational:

Romans 4:5 (Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition) – *But to him that worketh not, yet believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reputed to justice, according to the purpose of the grace of God.*

Romans 4:5 (King James Version) – *But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*

Romans 4:5 (New King James Version) – *But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.*

Romans 4:5 (Easy-to-Read Version) – *But people cannot do any work that will make them right with God. So they must trust in him. Then he accepts their faith, and that makes them right with him. He is the one who makes even evil people right*

Romans 4:5 (International Children’s Bible) – *But a person cannot do any work that will make him right with God. So he must trust in God. Then God accepts his faith, and that makes him right with God. God is the One who can make even those who are evil right in his sight.*

Romans 4:5 (Amplified Bible) – *But to the one who does not work [that is, the one who does not try to earn his salvation by doing good], but believes and completely trusts in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited to him as righteousness (right standing with God).*

Romans 4:5 (Good News Translation) – *But those who depend on faith, not on deeds, and who believe in the God who declares the guilty to be innocent, it is this faith that God takes into account in order to put them right with himself.*

19 – Richard K. Moore “An Unresolved Dilemma in English Bible Translation: How to English Paul’s Use of the Dikai-Family”

www.academia.edu/38445142/1_An_Unresolved_Dilemma_in_English_Bible_Translation_How_to_English_Pauls_Use_of_the_Dikai-Family

20 – The idea used by the Amplified & Good News Bibles

Can you see that depending on which English version you choose to read, or be taught from, will determine how you understand your righteousness? Is it:

- A technical, religious thing, developed by the church system? If so, then you have accepted ‘justify’ & ‘justification’.
- A legal issue, like the OT Law (Torah)? If so, then you have accepted ‘right’ or ‘righteous’.
- A relational issue, about how God relates to you? If so, then you have accepted ‘set right’ or ‘right standing’.

There are major differences in which one you adhere to. It will significantly affect how you relate to the Trinity and it will impact the degree to which you exercise liberty and freedom as a son.

Each of these generate a different attitude, depending on which one a person chooses to adhere to. This should not be the case because we must know how Father sees our imputed righteousness, not what we think his attitude is. Do you see that?

The NT meaning of ‘righteousness’/‘justification’ really comes down to what Paul meant when he wrote his letters. After all, he was taught by our Lord personally after his conversion, so he knew what Heaven’s perspective was on the matter. Is it relational or not? Who knows? Well, according to translators:

*“Inevitably, however, the question arises as to whether the relational model corresponds to the apostle’s own understanding and intentions.”*²¹

Let’s look at an instance where translations radically alter our understanding on the Kingdom in relation to our role in the restoration of all things. Here’s the location of the issue:

Romans 8:20-22 (New King James Version) – *For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.*

Note what has been underlined. ‘The glorious liberty of the children of God’ or ‘the glorious freedom of the children of God’ is the expression used in ¾ of the English translations on Biblegateway²². Now, check what some other translations have written for this verse:

Romans 8:21 (New International Version) – *that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.*

Romans 8:21 (English Standard Version) – *that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.*

Romans 8:21 (Complete Jewish Bible) – *that it too would be set free from its bondage to decay and would enjoy the freedom accompanying the glory that God’s children will have.*

From these references, the question arises: Is it freedom/liberty that has glory or does Father’s sons have glory? This is significant. We must understand that we are to display the glory of our sonship so that creation can eventually be set free from decay. Otherwise, we will adhere to the standard church teaching that we are mortals and will only have glory when we die and get our glorified bodies. But, the messages we are getting from our King is that we have glory and he wants to train us so we can display it for him.²³ Our eschatology (our view of the end of things) is also tremendously influenced by translators.

21 – Richard K. Moore “An Unresolved Dilemma in English Bible Translation: How to English Paul’s Use of the Dikai-Family”
www.academia.edu/38445142/1_An_Unresolved_Dilemma_in_English_Bible_Translation_How_to_English_Pauls_Use_of_the_Dikai-Family

22 – www.biblegateway.com

23 – Read canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/MESSAGE-Why-Bleak-Messages-8-11-2019.pdf

For example:

Matthew 24:3 (Contemporary English Version) – *Later, as Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, his disciples came to him in private and asked, “When will this happen? What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the world?”*

There are 2 problems with this version and many other translations because they lead readers to believe that the “signs” point to Jesus’ physical return and that the world will be destroyed. Looking at the verse in another version we find this:

Matthew 24:3 (Young's Literal Translation) – *And when he is sitting on the mount of the Olives, the disciples came near to him by himself, saying, “Tell us, when shall these be? and what [is] the sign of thy presence, and of the full end of the age?”*

Now that’s very different and produces a vastly different eschatology. The Greek word *parousia* means ‘personal presence’ or ‘being beside’, not ‘coming’ – although a person must come to be beside you. And, the Greek word *aeon* means ‘age’, not ‘world’.

The poor (‘bad’) translations of this verse puts everything off into the future so the NC can’t be appreciated. In reality, the “age” of the OC has ended and Jesus is present with us now. See the difference? So, lets enjoy his presence within us and be about the wonderful work he’s doing and enjoy our Kingdom life.

Here’s how the poor translation of *parousia* changes other doctrines.

1 Thessalonians 3:13 (New King James Version) – *so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.*

1 Thessalonians 3:13 (New International Version) – *May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.*

The NKJV and ¾ of the translations in BibleGateway put off the establishment of our hearts as blameless and holy until the time Jesus comes back again. In the mean time we have to languish in our sin. But... when *parousia* is properly translated as ‘presence’ (e.g. NIV, ISV, MSG) we are encouraged by knowing that we are already holy and blameless. We can now enjoy our relationship with the Trinity because our mind is not making us see ourselves unworthy because to the poor doctrine from the ‘bad’ translations.

The important thing to remember in regard to Bible translations is that we cannot know with all certainty what the writers of nearly every piece biblical text was thinking when they wrote it. This means that we may quite easily miss what they intended to pass on to their reads. As noted by Stephen Garfunkel (Jewish Theological Seminary of America) in his article on the *peshat* method of interpreting OT scripture:

“One cannot claim with certitude that authorial intention has been unearthed...Even more compelling is the avoidance of interpretations that could not have been historically intended by the text.”²⁴

To finish off, it should be very clear that it’s the translators of the Bible who determine a lot of what we believe. They are free to leave out sections which they deem not to be included, and add whatever they like – all justified, of course. They can translate words, phrases and sentences however they like – also, all justified.

Although the main tenets of the Christian religion are unaffected by which translation a person prefers to read, it’s important to realise that how a person applies what they read will affect their understanding of

24 – “Applied Peshat: Historical-Critical Method and Religious Meaning” p:24

www.academia.edu/5572356/Applied_Peshat_Historical-Critical_Method_and_Religious_Meaning

the realities of the Kingdom. In the end, they will be satisfied with the theology that translators have produced for them, but does it all line up with the Truth himself – that’s the thing.

This means that if you have either of the following opposing theologies, you were influenced by the Bible.

Theological Position #1	Theological Position #2
You need to be baptised to be ‘saved’	<i>We only need to believe to be ‘saved’</i>
You must preach the gospel to creatures as well as people	<i>We present the gospel to those Holy Spirit shows us</i>
Signs only followed Jesus and his disciples	<i>We have the full authority of Jesus over the enemy</i>
We don’t have any control over natural calamities	<i>Calamities are influenced by our attitudes</i>
Our faith in Christ is righteous in God’s sight	<i>Our righteousness was purchased by Christ’s faithfulness</i>
God leads us in the right paths	<i>Holy Spirit shows us how to live / alignment with Heaven</i>
Satan is still around because Jesus only bruised him	<i>Satan was defeated by Jesus and he uses us to ‘clean him up’</i>
We are legally righteous in God’s sight	<i>We have been put in a right relationship with God</i>
We will have liberty in Christ which is glorious	<i>We now have liberty and glory to demonstrate to others</i>
Keep watch for the signs in Matthew 24 for Jesus’ coming	<i>We are at rest as the King will advise us when he’s coming</i>
When Jesus returns he will destroy the Earth	<i>Our home is on the Earth which has been renovated (restored)</i>
When Jesus returns we will be able to be in his presence	<i>We are in the presence on Jesus and Father all the time</i>

The Lessons to Learn

(1) Using the Bible to justify theologies is why there are so many insulated denominations and movements. As a result, there is no universal Body of Christ in existence today with more than 30,000 separate denominations worldwide. The reason why there is no genuine Body organism? Each separate group says it doesn’t need the others because they’re all wrong, creating a heresy (schism) based on their truth, not on untruth. This is the error Paul warned about when he wrote that the eye can’t say to the hand, “I don’t need you”.²⁵ Every person is important for the Body organism and that means we are all supposed to be bonded together in love.

(2) Jesus is coming back for a united Bride with each member in harmony, so it will be quite a while before he returns.

(3) Justifying theology based on biblical interpretation is about right and wrong, not about receiving the truth. This process is feeding off the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil which is not the one we are to get nourishment from. The Kingdom, on the other hand, flourishes on the Tree of Life.

(There are some helpful resources on the next page)

Laurence

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RESOURCES

- “The Book of Revelation Revealed” (Brian Simmons with Patricia King).....[0:00-4:00]
www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAr2MEn74QU
- An easy to read article about the problems associated with translation.²⁶



Why Bible Translations Differ: A Guide for the Perplexed

BEN SPACKMAN

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Brigham Young once said that “if [the Bible] be translated incorectly, and there is a scholar on the earth who professes to be a Christian, and he can translate it any better than King James’s translators did it, he is under obligation to do so.”¹ Many translations have appeared since 1611, and modern Apostles have profusely consulted these other Bible translations, sometimes citing them in general conference or the Ensign.² Latter-day Saints who likewise wish to engage in personal study from other Bible translations will quickly notice differences of various kind, not only in style but also in substance. Some differences between translations are subtle, others glaringly obvious, such as the first translation of Psalm 23 into Tlingit: “The Lord is my Goatherder. I don’t want him; he hauls me up the mountain; he drags me down to the beach.”³

While the typical Latter-day Saint reads the Bible fairly often,⁴ many are unfamiliar with “where the [biblical] texts originated, how they were transmitted, what sorts of issues translators struggled with, or even how different types of translations work, or even where to start finding answers.”⁵ Generally speaking, differences arise from four aspects of the translation process, three

BE AWARE:
This document was written by a
Mormon for Mormons.

26 – Ben Spackman (2014) “Why Bible Translations Differ: A Guide for the Perplexed”
www.academia.edu/6104308/_Draft_Why_Bible_Translations_Differ_A_Guide_for_the_Perplexed