



Lesson #5

Before Reading the Bible:

Language Barriers

Lesson #5: Bible Language Barriers

In the last lesson, we compared different texts found in the KJV with other versions of the bible. Although the differences between some texts may be subtle, when you rely completely on translations that routinely leave out bits and pieces of information, false ideas and doctrines can take root. As also mentioned in the previous lesson, the KJV does a very good job at preserving the overall message of the bible, which is the fact that salvation comes through Christ.

You may or may not already know that the Old Testament of the bible was originally written in the Hebrew language, while the New Testament was translated from Greek manuscripts. Due to the fact that the KJV was translated into English many generations ago, some issues with the old English language can pose a problem. The wording can be off-putting at first, but as you continue to read, it begins to grow on you.

Look up Psalm 31:19 in the KJV and translate into today's English:

It was also mentioned before that it is helpful to keep a modern translation nearby, only for the purpose of helping to clarify words or parts of texts that may be hard to understand in the KJV due to language choices.

The use of the words “thee” and “thou” are obviously terms that we don't hear now on a daily basis. However, the use of those words does not change the context or meaning of the underlying message, but they do take some getting used to.

Other words like “fear”, as found in Psalm 31:19, slightly changes the sentiment of the text if you take the word out of its intended context.

Read Psalm 31:19 KJV:

The writer of the text (King David) and the translators were not suggesting that we should be afraid of God. Instead, they were trying to convey that believers should have feelings of immense respect for God.

As you can see, some word choices are cosmetic and do not change the underlying message of the text, but other words can change the spirit of the message and the way the reader relates to what is being said. For example, if someone who was brought up by an abusive father saw in the Bible that we should have “fear” for our heavenly Father, it might not sit well with them. They may find it hard to understand the kind of unconditional love that God our Father has for those who trust in Him. In fact, the love of God surpasses the love of any father on Earth.

Read 2 Timothy 1:7 KJV:

Other types of wording issues may not be as easy to spot and may require more investigative work to resolve. For example, let's look at Matthew 24. When you read the entire chapter, at first glance, there seems to be a contradiction concerning the timing of Christ's second coming.

Read Matthew 24:1-3 (KJV)

Read Matthew 24:34 KJV. Do you see a problem?

We know that a problem exists in the translation because the literal “world” did not come to an end in that generation long ago, as Jesus said it would in Matthew 24:34. This issue can be cleared up by referencing another version of the bible.

Look up Matthew 24:3 in the NIV. What word was used instead of the word “world”?

In fact, it was not the “world” that was to come to an end during that time; it was the “age” that was ending and the end of the “Old Covenant world”. It doesn't happen often, but there is evidence that the translators of the KJV cut some corners here and there in their translation process. The word “world” is a prime example of this. There are 3 words in the original Greek manuscripts that were assigned the word “world”, instead of other words that may have been

a better fit. Below are some examples of where the word “world” was used instead of other more suitable words:

Read Luke 2:1 KJV Original Greek word for “world” was: *Oikoumenem*, Meaning: Kingdom/Empire

Read Galatians 1:4 KJV Original Greek word for “world” was: *Aionos*, Meaning: Age

Read Revelation 11:15 KJV Original Greek word for “world” was: *Kosmos* Meaning: Everything Local or Global

Due to the use of this mistranslated word (world) in the KJV and in other translations of the bible, there are some who have come to believe that the word “world” and the word “earth” are synonymous in bible prophecy. This idea causes friction between certain texts in the bible and has led to the belief that the Earth will be destroyed at the very end of time. Consider the text below...

1 Corinthians 10:11 KJV

Now all these things happened unto them for examples:

and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

Due to the use of the word “world” in 1 Corinthians 10:11, it is implied that the literal world was going to come to an end during the time period that the apostle Paul wrote the passage. It is quite obvious that the literal world (the earth) did not come to an end at that time. In fact, what the apostle was referring to was the end of the Old Covenant world. This will be discussed in more depth in later lessons, but for now, it is important to understand that the literal Earth will not be destroyed in the future...

Psalm 37:9 KJV

For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth.

Psalm 82:8 KJV

Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.

Matthew 5:5 KJV

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

