**How We Got the Bible**

**Wrap-Up**

We ended our sermon series on “How We God the Bible”. I greatly appreciate the attention and focus everyone gave to the sermon series. There is always so much more to say. And I always feel that there is something left to say.

So, I send this note to address one question that came up after the service. . .

**“What is a good or the best English Bible to use?”**

I wish the answer was simple. And it can be for those who want to read just one English translation. I have one New Testament publication that has 7 English translations and also includes the Greek Text, giving 8 views of the New Testament test.

The Precise Parallel New Testament; Oxford University Press 1995

Edited by John R. Kohlenberger III; ISBN 0-19-528412-7

I preach from the New American Standard, which is a real translation. I constantly check with other real translations. I do not waist my time with paraphrases or dynamic Equivalent publications (The Message, TEV, NIV. . . etc.) But behind these English translations. . . is the Greek and Hebrew. This is one of the main reasons I went to Seminary. I wanted to know what God’s Word said in its original language.

So, there are other “real translations” in English but the list is short.

Here are those readily available that most people are aware of.

**King James Version 1611 and the New King James Version 1982**

**New American Standard 1995 (updated version)**

**English Standard Bible 2017 (updated versions)**

**Revised Standard Version 1952**

**New Revised Standard Version 1989**

**New English Translation 2005 (the NET Bible). . . latest revision 2019 – find online**

And yes, behind all of these translations. . . is the Greek and Hebrew. All of them trace their heritage back and through Erasmus’ Greek New Testament (1516). But then there have been thousands of Greek manuscripts found since the 16th c. and scholars use those to produce the latest publications.

You can buy from the translators of the ESV (Crossway) a parallel Greek New Testament with parsing guide. [English-Greek Reverse Interlinear New Testament] They use the 27th revised edition of the Greek New Testament.

Note that scholars are studying all the time over the parchments and papyri they have in their possession and come out with small edits in the text. These are due to scholars still going through thousands of un-researched materials. None of the edits have any change to the historical biblical narrative.

There are two main publication groups for the Greek New Testament – The United Bible Society and its 5th, Revised Edition (latest 2014) and the Nestle-Aland group published The Novum Testamentum Graece Nestle-Aland 28th Greek New Testament (2012). Both have world-wide respect. And both have the same lead translation group.

https://www.academic-bible.com/en/bible-society-and-biblical-studies/greek-new-testament/comparison-na28-ubs5/

The differences are within the critical apparatus which is a reference section on each page providing detail from what ancient Greek manuscripts were used. In the 5th Edition, the apparatus unit, gives a fuller accounting than in Nestle-Aland (especially more Church Fathers).

**Catalyst behind New Bible Publication – Reading level and New Finds**

The year I spent serving at the American Bible Society (ABS) opened my eyes to the wider world of Bible publication. ABS (founded 1816 New York) is the organization who launched the T.E.V. (Good News for Modern Man – Today’s English Version) back in 1966). This Bible was published in an 8th grade reading level and received great criticism for its inaccurate text.

Historically the KJV is viewed to be written in a 11-12 grade level. I know. . . there are recent computer analysis that are programed to grade the KJV to be a lower level, but these programs only consider a portion of the equation. The reason “grade level” makes a difference is that when you convey “Go Cat Go” as in a Dr. Seuss book. . . you get the idea that a small fury animal is running or something???? The phrase leaves a lot of detail out. The lower grade level you publish, the more detail is left out.

I was with ABS (1999) when they launched the Contemporary English Bible (CEB) which was purposely written on a 5th grade reading level. They saw that the national newspaper (USA Today) was on a 5th grade level, so they followed. Their goal was to reach readers who spoke English as a second language and for those who had a hard time reading due to education or impairment. Their goal was not to undermine God’s Word. Their goal was to reach more people providing them an introduction in the Bible. However, in their effort. . . the reality is . . . that you cannot produce a 5th grade level Bible without leaving some detail out that would be conveyed in a higher grade level publication.

So, lets go back to 1973 when the International Bible Society launched of the NIV (New International Version). A little history. . . the New York Bible Society, founded in 1809, changed its name to the International Bible Society (1988) and moved to Palmer Lake, Colorado (suburb of Colorado Springs). In 2009, the International Bible Society changed its name to Biblica. So, the popular NIV was their publication in an attempt to reach more people who read on a lower reading level – 7th grade. The International Bible Society had a great marketing plan for the NIV. They partnered with Zondervan book publisher to pair the NIV with many of Zondervan’s bible-study materials. Within a short time, the NIV became the most marketed Bible and thus the claim came forward that the NIV published more units as compared to the others.

However, in the scholarly and theological world. . . they knew. . . that the NIV had serious shortcomings. This has been detailed and written about for years. In all fairness, I see that the International Bible Society and ABS both desired to make God’s Word more readable. However, reader beware. . . you can get a basic understanding of God’s Word but by no means. . . make theological decisions using the NIV, TEV or CEB or any non-direct translation. Here is a list from Christion Book Distributors identifying grade reading level for a number of Bibles. This report is similar to others.

* KJV — 12 RSV — 12 NRSV — 11 NASB — 11
* ESV — 10 HCSB — 7-8 NIV — 7-8 CEB — 7
* CSB — 7 NKJV — 7 NLT — 6 GW — 5
* Message — 4-5 NCV — 3 NIrV — 3

Always remember that reading and studying God’s Word begins with prayer. Seek to be in a spiritual mind-set. Seek to surround yourself with others who can and will visit with you about God’s message. And do not make any hard decisions based upon reading one English version of the Bible. We live in an age where a person can go online and find great resources. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>

I do like the ESV study bible that gives you a code to access their online study material.

<https://www.crossway.org/bibles/esv-study-bible-none-case/>

And the NET Bible has really good notes for just about every verse.

[https://netbible.org/bible/Matthew+1#](https://netbible.org/bible/Matthew+1)

I prepare my sermons and preach from the NAS. However, that is a starting point for me. The NAS is the text I used in seminary and have memorized specific wording for many Scriptures. So, when I go to look up a verse, I search there first and then study the Greek and other English translations. I never prepare a sermon from just the English or one English translation.

I pray for all to prepare their heart to read and study God’s Word.

This is a life-long journey.

In Christ . . . Matthew