

BELIEVING THE BIBLE

WEEK 4 – SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

Mistranslations in the Bible and the Consequences of These Mistakes

By Larry Holzwarth

To some, the Bible is the infallible and unchangeable word of God, written by Him and eternally sacrosanct. But which Bible? There are many different Bibles which contain different books within, and the several differing translations of those books has changed their content over the centuries. Verses have been added, removed, and modified to alter their meaning. Some have been simply forgeries, inserted for political and social reasons. Words which mean one thing in Greek or Hebrew have been given entirely different meanings by interpreters, sometimes out of ignorance, and sometimes out of plan.

When the Bible has been edited to modernize its language, for the purpose of making it more readily understood, its editors have used verses already modified from the original and modified them yet further. Entire verses have been moved and footnoted, changing the meaning of the original, not only to make it more readable to modern eyes, but to reflect the opinions and beliefs of the editors. This has been done despite the scriptural admonition against changing one word of the biblical prophecy, a verse which has itself been changed, its meaning altered, until another future editor decides to alter it yet again.

Here are several changes to the Bible which have been made over the years, changing what is called by believers the Word of the Lord into the words of man.

1. Acts 8:37 from the King James Version of the Bible confuses readers on requirements of Baptism – but sometimes this verse is omitted entirely!

In Acts chapter 8, the Apostle Philip preached the Gospel of Jesus to a eunuch, and when the two came to a “certain water”, the eunuch asked what “doth hinder me to be baptized?” Philip replied in Acts 8:37 (KJV); “And Philip answered, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Philip then baptized the eunuch in the ensuing verses, after which he was spirited away, so that the eunuch “saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8: 39). Numerous later translations of the bible removed Acts 8:37 entirely, while others modify the story.

In the New International Version, for example, Acts 8:38 tells of Philip stopping the chariot in which they were traveling and baptizing the eunuch without responding to his question. The verse was removed in its entirety, though in some editions it is included as a footnote, stating that some versions of the bible contain the verse. The Jehovah’s Witness bible (NWT), the New American Standard Version (NASV) and the Revised Standard Version (RSV) all removed the verse from the King James Version. When the removal of the verse is not explained, it implies a change to the

requirements for baptism, without delineating what those changes may be.

2. The Amplified Bible tries to improve readability by Inserting editorial comments and ideas throughout the text.

The Amplified Bible, produced the by Lockman Foundation, with assistance from Zondervan, a subsidiary of News Corps which holds the commercial rights for the New International Version of the Bible in the United States and Canada, was first published beginning in 1965. Amplified means the addition of text to stress certain passages and by inference, reducing the importance of other text by the lack of such amplification. For example, in the KJV, Acts 16:31 reads, “And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” The American Standard Version (ASV) of the same verse drops the title Christ, but otherwise the verse is very similar to the KJV.

In the amplified version, (which was revised in 2015 to make additional amplifications) the verse reads; “Believe in the Lord Jesus [as your personal Savior and entrust yourself to him] and you will be saved, you and your household, [if they also believe].” Thus the Amplified Bible not only alters the text and the translation of certain passages, but also inserts editorial comment. Punctuation alteration, such as the insertion of brackets which contain amplifying commentary, is used to stress certain verses, point out others which the authors claim to be inadequately justified by source documents, and improves readability.

3. Bible word counts differ substantially... Yet Revelations threatens God’s consequences if the text is altered.

The word counts of the complete Bible text differ, obviously between the different translations, and sometimes within editions of the same translation. For example, one source reports the New International Version as containing 727, 969 words, another claims the NIV’s word count as 726,109. The King James Version is 783,137 words; the New KJV is reported by the same word count source as containing 770,430 words. Obviously many words have been removed from different editions or versions of the bible, which renders them works of the editors and scholars which prepared them.

Why is this of any significance? Revelations 22:19 (KJV) reads; “And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” It can be argued that the ominous warning in the verse applies only to the Book of Revelations in which it appears, but it still seems clear that modifying the book by addition or subtraction is a punishable offense. The same verse appears with different wording and phrasing in other translations. The Amplified Bible takes the modification a great deal further.

4. Amplified Bible Alterations also warn and threaten consequences to taking away from the text of the Bible.

The same verse referenced above, Revelations 22:19, appears in the Amplified Bible thus; “And if

anyone cancels or takes away from the statements of the book of this prophecy – these predictions relating to Christ’s kingdom and its speedy triumph, together with the consolations and admonitions (warnings) pertaining to them – God will cancel and take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the city of holiness (pure and hallowed) which are described and promised in this book.” The additions to the verse are easily seen, and the result is the publication of an opinion based not on the words of the original text but on the beliefs of the editor.

Such changes to the source text are prevalent in all known versions of the Bible, including the King James Version, which is known for the virulence of some of its defenders. Some of these claim that all other versions of the Bible are false, little more than forgeries, and that the King James Version is the only version of the Bible which should be used. In doing so they ignore the many errors of translation between the original source documents, as well as the clear insertion of additional verses many years after the original documents were written. The Amplified Bible makes clear that the book is intended to be taken literally.

5. Changes to the Gospel of Mark give Christians instructions... But these instructions come from an unknown author.

In the King James Bible, the Gospel of Mark ends with 16:20, “And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.” Most translations of Mark follow the KJV, with varying verbiage for the verses of chapter 16, which closely follow the Gospel of Luke. They appear to have been added by an unknown author or authors other than the original author of Mark, based on the oldest known manuscripts of the work. The oldest extant copies of Mark end at 16:8, and there are numerous copies which indicate the work ended there. One is the Sinaitic copy, circa 370 CE, another is the Vatican copy, circa 325 CE.

There are many theories regarding the gospel stopping abruptly after 16:8, as well as when the additional verses were added. The additional verses describe the Ascension, and are included in the KJV without subsequent commentary, though many newer translations contain notes pointing out the unknown provenance of the subsequent verses after 16:8. Much of the later verses refer to the criteria for salvation (which differ from elsewhere in the Bible), proselytization, and the Great Commission, the command from Jesus to preach the word to all. The Great Commission is to many fundamentalists their Prime Directive, unaware that it was a later addition to the Gospel and of unknown origin.

6. Changes to Matthew and the Lord’s Prayer first appear in Byzantine texts – which is much later than commonly believed.

The prayer known as the Lord’s Prayer appears twice in the gospels, in differing versions, in both Luke and Matthew. Commonly among Protestant congregations, the prayer includes the doxology; “For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.” It appears thus in the KJV, Matthew 6:13. It does not appear in the similar in sentiment, but different in presentation version of the prayer which appears in the Gospel of Luke. It does not appear in the oldest known manuscripts of the gospel of Matthew, and appears to have been inserted into the gospel by an unknown writer, since subsequent verses are numbered out of order.

The doxology first appeared in the Byzantine texts of the gospel of Matthew. It appeared in the Didache, which was the first written catechism of the teachings of the twelve apostles and which appeared in the first century. Authorship of the Didache is unknown, other literary references to it appear during the third century, and though some Church Fathers argued for its inclusion in the New Testament it was not deemed to be sufficiently documented. When the doxology was inserted into the Gospel of Matthew is, likewise, uncertain. The modification of the Gospel of Matthew is acknowledged in new translations of the Bible, and many do not include it in their versions.

7. The Controversial History of the King James Bible sometimes creates doubt on whether it is a reliable source for the Word of God.

Those who defend the King James Bible as the inerrant word of God miss an important point. It was never intended to be so. The Bible was commissioned by the British King after he convened the Hampton Court Conference in 1604, where problems with earlier English translations which were contrary to the Puritan sect of the Church of England were discussed. Following the discussions of the meetings at Hampton Court, James directed the translators to ensure that the new Christian bible, which would be known as the Authorized Version because it would be the only bible allowed to be read in churches, would conform to the ecclesiastic policies of the Church of England.

The Church of England depended on ordained clergy and a hierarchical structure which did not exist in the translations of the time, and altered their new bible accordingly. The King James Bible was not intended to be the inerrant word of God but the basis of the authority of the Church of England, and the monarchy of England as the church's rightful head. James also ordered the translators to use as referential starting points and style guides two existing English translations, the Great Bible and the Geneva Bible, both of which were problematic for the Puritans. Other existing bibles which could be referenced by the translators were required to be on a list approved by the king.

8. Early criticism of the King James Bible shows inaccuracies in translation from earlier texts.

When the King James Bible was being written, it was done so by committees, with six committees translating assigned portions. The majority of the Old Testament was translated from Hebrew, with some sections from Aramaic. The New Testament was translated from Greek, and the books of the Apocrypha from Latin and Greek. Existing English bibles were used as references as well. All of the committees worked not for a word for word translation of the source documents, but from the view that the source documents were to be used to support the ecclesiology of the Church of England. This approach delivered significant differences between the resulting King James Bible and the Latin Vulgate Bible, as well as with existing English translations.

The highly esteemed English scholar of the Hebrew language expert (for his day) Hugh Broughton roundly condemned the approach taken by the translators, and the completed work as inaccurate, calling it an "abominable translation...foisted upon the English people." Thomas Hobbes compared the new English translation unfavorably to the Latin, and in his critical work on statecraft *Leviathan* (the title taken from the Book of Job) he used biblical chapter and verse references from the Latin Vulgate, rather than those of the King James Version, which often did not correspond. King James

ordered the printing of any other bible in English suspended for a time, ensuring the Authorized Bible's use would increase.

9. Mistranslations in the King James Bible go on and on.

The writers of the King James Bible had access in several cases to original source documents, but they did not use them in producing their new bible, relying instead on earlier translations by other scholars and existing English bibles. To these, they changed or added verses in order to achieve the goals mandated by their king. Old Testament verses were taken from the existing English bibles, including the Rheimish New Testament (when Christ quoted the scriptures), which they were explicitly told not to use as a reference and which they subsequently criticized in the preface to their finished work. Old Testament passages were altered where needed to support subsequent Christian theology and tradition.

For example, Psalm 16:22 read in the Hebrew texts as "...like lions my hands and feet." The translators changed the passage to read "They pierced my hands and my feet", to adhere to Christian beliefs. They also changed the titles of the Books of First and Second Esdras, renaming the Old Testament books Ezra and Nehemiah respectively, changing third and fourth Esdras to First and Second. The changes to the text of the Hebrew bible, known to Christians as the Old Testament, were relatively subtle in comparison to the creativity applied to the New Testament, in which several verses were simply added, with some inserted in existing gospels in order to confirm their place in others.

10. The New Testament's translation in the King James Version sometimes isn't even based on ancient text – they don't know where it came from!

The chief source for the writers of the KJV New Testament was a Greek edition by Theodore Beza, which included a Latin translation of the gospels as well. A later noted biblical scholar, Frederick Scrivener, noted 190 instances where the scholars working on the King James Version deviated from the Greek and Latin texts, and opted instead to use the existing texts from other English translations. Scrivener noted numerous incidents – more than three dozen – where the resultant English text had no supporting Greek text from which it was translated. In other words, the King James Version contains many verses which do not appear in the translations of the original Greek.

Closer scrutiny of the original documents, or rather the oldest surviving manuscripts of the books of the New Testament, confirms many of the verses of the King James Version having no supporting source material, hence their omission or reduction to footnotes in subsequent versions of the bible. Supporters of the King James Version argue that such revision is in itself an abomination, since to them the King James Version is simply a translation of the word of God from its original ancient languages. In fact, the King James Version is a conflation of several different bible translations, from more than a dozen languages, compiled by 47 men in six committees.

11. Translation of words and the printing accident that caused a 17th century printer to print the mistake: "Thou Shalt Commit Adultery"

A primary motivation for the translators preparing the King James Version of the bible was readability by their fellow English citizenry, as well as the flowing sweep of the language when passages of the bible were read aloud from the pulpit. Spelling and punctuation were often changed, however, by the printers, who altered the spellings of words or omitted punctuation marks in order to maintain the integrity of the columns in which the volume was printed. The first released edition in 1611 had been carefully set in type, later editions found printers who were less concerned with what would one day be called quality control, and punctuation, capitalization, and even the omission of words and phrases became commonplace.

In one instance, in 1631, printers Robert Barker and Martin Lucas, who had printed the first edition of the Authorized Bible (KJV), made a printing error which cost them their license as the Royal Printer and a fine equivalent to approximately \$75,000 today. In Exodus 20:14 they omitted the word not and printed “Thou shalt commit adultery”. An outraged King ordered all copies of the misprinted book be seized and burned and possession of the bible became a crime, but a few copies survived into the 21st century. While not all misprints and similar errors were as obvious, the incident illustrates how the simple misplacement of a single word can change the meaning

12. The Septuagint and Hebrew mistranslations could hold major revelations about the Virgin Mary.

The text of the Hebrew bible was translated into Greek more than two centuries before the Common Era, meaning some Old Testament books were available in Greek before the New Testament was written. The Greek translation is known as the Septuagint. The Septuagint is generally agreed upon by scholars as containing numerous errors of translation based upon poorly understood Hebrew synonyms. The translators allowed several Hebrew words to be used interchangeably when their meanings in the original were very much different. One of these is the Hebrew word *alma*, which was translated into Greek as meaning virgin, when in fact it refers to a young woman, *betulah* being the Hebrew word to refer to a pure woman, that is, a virgin.

Isaiah 7:14 prophecies the birth of Emmanuel to a virgin, and is quoted in the first Chapter of Matthew, describing the virgin birth of Christ, one of the bases of Christianity. But Isaiah uses the Hebrew word *amah*, meaning a young woman, rather than *betulah*, meaning a pure woman. Matthew quotes the virgin birth as being the fulfillment of the prophet, the delivery of the Messiah. But the translation is wrong. The word *amah* appears only once in Isaiah (7:14) but the word *betulah* appears five times in the book, each time clearly in reference to a virgin (23:4, 23:12, 37:22, 47:1, and 62:5). The translation into Greek remains the source of the description of the prophecy of the virgin birth, it is not apparent in the original Hebrew.

13. Problems from the beginning – the very beginning. The creation story translated directly from Hebrew Texts gives Genesis a whole new meaning.

The first verse of the King James Version of the bible reads, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”. The original Hebrew does not contain the definite article the, and pluralizes heaven to heavens. It also includes when correctly translated into English the word had and thus the verse should read, “In a beginning God had created the heavens and the earth”. This translation contains several implications when applied to the verses which follow, since it clearly states that the

earth and indeed the universe had been created at an earlier time. Whether the translators of the KJV deliberately altered the meaning or translated it thus out of a lack of knowledge of Hebrew is a matter of speculation.

The same cannot be said of the second verse of Genesis, which refers in the KJV to the earth being “without form and void” a reflection of Calvinist views of the earth being chaotic and shapeless. The Hebrew word translated as meaning without form is *tohu*, which does not mean what the KJV states it means, but rather refers to consequences, as in the consequences for sin. A word for word translation from Hebrew into English changes the verse to read, “And the earth had become waste and empty; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” The basis of the mistranslation of the second verse was based largely on the mistranslation of the first verse of Genesis.

14. “Giants” in the earth could be an enormous mistranslation that rewrites many of the Bible’s stories

The word giant appears a multitude of times in the King James Version of the bible, nearly always implying persons of enormous size, when the Hebrew word so translated does not refer to stature, but rather character. One example is in the book of Job, when that symbol of extraordinary patience laments, “He breaketh me with breach upon breach, he runneth upon me like a giant”. The English word giant is a mistranslation of the Hebrew word *gibbor* which more accurately translated means a mighty man or a mighty warrior. The word appears accurately translated in Genesis, an indication of the problems input into the King James bible by its manners of creation.

Not all of the committees which produced different books of the King James Bible were staffed with men of equal ability and knowledge of the ancient languages to which they referred. Often nuanced words of Hebrew, which had at one time become nearly extinct, were improperly translated, and when confronted with a Hebrew word of which the committee had insufficient knowledge the corresponding English word in the existing English translations was used. The technique meant that in some books the correct Hebrew meaning was achieved while in others an incorrect meaning prevailed, and still prevails. Newer translations which strive to be more reflective of the original Hebrew and Greek thus detract from the KJV, causing its celebrants to claim they are distorting God’s inerrant word.

15. Isaiah Chapter 9, verses 6 and 7 written in the King James Version reflects the Monarchy’s message to the people: Being King is a divine right.

The necessity of the creators of the King James Bible to please the monarch who commissioned them is evident in Isaiah, which in Chapter 9 contains two verses which read “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. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

The Hebrew word mistranslated as government actually means to have power, and appears nowhere

else in the Old Testament besides these two verses. The verses as mistranslated support the concept of government to be assumed to be the rightful burden of kings on their thrones. The verse correctly translated substitutes the word power for government, and places it firmly upon the shoulders of the child born, with that power increasing forever. The writer of Matthew (and its KJV translator) correctly summarizes the two verses of Isaiah which served to support the divine right of kings.

16. More Calvinistic influence

Divine retribution in the form of punishment was a favorite theme of John Calvin, who was a fan of delivering punishments himself whenever the opportunity beckoned. His influence on the Geneva Bible led to a mistranslation which was repeated by the translators in the King James Version. In Zechariah 14:19, the KJV version reads, "This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles." The use of the word punishment first appeared in the Geneva Bible, and is a mistranslation of the Hebrew word meaning not punishment but to sin. The Bishop's Bible changed the wording to read the plague of Egypt and all nations.

The translators of the KJV accepted the Geneva Bible version of the verse, which if correctly translated from Hebrew reads, "This shall be the sin of Egypt, and the sin of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles", clearly an altogether different meaning from the Calvinistic view expressed by the mistranslation. The verse indicates a vengeful and punishing God, a view espoused by Calvin and his followers, but not by the writer of the verse in its original language. Luther's German bible contained the correct word for sin in German, as did the Latin Vulgate in Latin, but they were not influenced by the Calvinistic views which affected much of the Protestant theology in England at the time.

17. Jesus on the pinnacle verses reflect the views of the translators rather than the original writers.

According to the King James Version of Matthew, in verse 4:5, "Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple", a mistranslation which reflected the views of the translators rather than that of the original writers. The Latin Vulgate bible used the word *pinnaculum* to describe the roof of the temple, which had no steeples or pinnacles as did the churches of seventeenth century England. It was flat. The proper translation from the Greek texts would read on the corner of the roof rather than to a pinnacle, which implies an elevation above the roof itself.

Although the change is relatively insignificant in terms of its reflection on the meaning of the verse, it does indicate that influences besides the source documents and previous translations were included in the King James Version by its translators. Spires, steeples, and church towers were part of the environment for the King James translators, but not the original writers of the gospels. That their (the translators) religious views and their belief in what a proper house of worship should contain was included in their work is evident from such small changes, adding information which was not contained in the original texts, by alterations both large and small.

18. All scripture is inspired by God, including each and every verse in the Bible is NOT what God's messengers intended.

One of the most frequently quoted verses cited as proof that the entire contents of the Bible is divinely inspired comes from 2 Timothy. Verse 3:16 reads, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” This is a mistranslation and likely a deliberate one in the King James Version, which was written in part to be the only bible available for use in the Church of England, rendering it, and by extension its leader, the King, infallible and incontrovertible.

The correct translation from the oldest extant copy of 2 Timothy renders the verse in this manner, “All God-breathed scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” By writing that God-breathed scripture – not all scripture – is profitable Paul implies that there is scripture that is not directly the word of God, while some parts of the scripture are. This mistranslation appears in the King James Version and has been altered in later revisions of the bible, which reject the theory that the entire work is the literal word of God, and thus infallible in its teaching, an outrage to some believers in the King James Version.

Where do we find this stuff? Here are our sources:

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