

Which Bible Translation(s) Should I Use?

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A manuscript is an old document that was written by hand before the printing press was invented. We don't have the original manuscript for any book of the Bible. But we do have later manuscripts that are copies of the original manuscripts. And when we compare the copies to each other, what we find is that they always disagree to some extent.

So the Bible has not been preserved miraculously. Instead God chose to preserve the Bible providentially. In other words, he used ordinary means instead of supernatural means to preserve the Bible. He used people in all their weaknesses to copy his word instead of overriding their failures and flaws.

So how can we know what the exact wording was in the original manuscripts of the Bible? This is where a branch of scholarship called textual criticism comes into play. Textual criticism is focused on identifying variations in the copies of a book and reconstructing the original text of the book as closely as possible.

The New Testament in the King James Version is based on inferior manuscript support. This problem can be traced back to a man named Desiderius Erasmus, who was a Roman Catholic priest. He had the honor of being the first person to publish a printed Greek New Testament in 1516. But he rushed to complete the project, and as a result he had to rely on a small number of late Greek manuscripts. He used only seven manuscripts, and the oldest one was from the 11th century. He also relied on the Latin Vulgate instead of the Greek at times.

After Erasmus's Greek New Testament was revised and reprinted many times, it became known as the Textus Receptus, which is a Latin phrase that means "Received Text." It was widely accepted 1500s and 1600s, and so it was the basis for all the early English Bible translations, including the King James Version. But in the 1800s many New Testament manuscripts were discovered, and some of them were very old. The two most important ones are called Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus. Both of these manuscripts are dated back to the fourth century.

So a new translation of the Bible was published in 1881 (New Testament) and 1885 (whole Bible). It was called the Revised Version because it was a revision of the King James Version. It was not based on the Textus Receptus but a Greek New Testament published by two British scholars named Westcott and Hort. It was based heavily on Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus. Then the American Standard Version was published in 1900 (New Testament) and 1901 (whole Bible). It was a revision of the Revised Version using American English.

Here are some of the most significant differences between the KJV and the ASV:

- “In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had” (John 5:3–4 KJV).
- “In these lay a multitude of them that were sick, blind, halt, withered” (John 5:3–4 ASV).

Here are some of the most significant differences between the KJV and the ASV:

- “And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:5–6 KJV).
- “And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he *said*, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: but rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:5–6 ASV).

Here are some of the most significant differences between the KJV and the ASV:

- “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:20 KJV).
- “For ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:20 ASV).

Here are some of the most significant differences between the KJV and the ASV:

- “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not” (1 John 3:1 KJV).
- “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not” (1 John 3:1 ASV).

Here are some of the most significant differences between the KJV and the ASV:

- “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one” (1 John 5:7–8 KJV).
- “And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one” (1 John 5:7–8 ASV).

Here are some of the most significant differences between the KJV and the ASV:

- “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” (Revelation 22:19 KJV).
- “And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:19 ASV).

So the ASV was a major improvement on the KJV because it was based on better manuscript support. But many people criticized the ASV for the changes that were made. Some of them even argued for a position called the King James Only view, and this view is still held by people today. They believe that the KJV is perfect and that it's wrong to make any changes to it. They argue that God in his providence has chosen to preserve his Word in the KJV.

Here are some responses to the King James Only view:

- What about people who lived before the KJV was published? How did they have access to God's preserved Word?
- What about people who don't understand English? How can they have access to God's preserved Word?
- God in his providence has chosen to allow many bad things to take place. They do not meet with his approval simply because they fall under his providence. So God's providence does not imply that he endorses the errors in the KJV.

I cannot recommend the KJV for people to use today. There are currently much better translations available for us to use.