

Biblical Answers to Critical Questions, Part 9: Why Can I Trust my English Bible Translation?

August 14, 2022

Nehemiah 7:73 – 8:9

Which English Bible Translation Can I Trust?

8 Key Words Related to having a Bible in your hands that you can trust.

Nehemiah chapters 7-8 deal with the 2nd & 3rd generations after their return from exile.

- 1) **Desire**: Neh. 7:73-8:1, they gathered together as one man at the Water Gate. They told Ezra to bring the Book of the Law. It is in the Scriptures that we learn of Christ, of the Gospel, and how He paid the penalty of sin on the cross. It is our sole source of information on this.
- 2) **Availability**: 8:2, Ezra brought the Book of the Law before the people. At one point, Israel didn't have one copy of the Law. But during Josiah's reign, Hilkiah found a copy and the Law was read to Josiah leading to many reforms for Israel, 2 Kings 22.
 - a. In the 14th century the Catholic church kept every copy of the Bible. John Wycliffe made translations of the Latin version into Middle English.
 - b. William Tindale born in 1494, the official founder of English translation into Modern English, an ordained Roman Catholic priest. He translated the Bible in secret.
 - i. He translated only from the original Hebrew & Greek and was accurate to its original meaning. He made up new words if there wasn't a good English translation, i.e., intercession, Passover, atonement, & scapegoat.
- 3) **Listening**: 8:3, "the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law." It was read in the open square "Water Gate," where the people get water, not in the temple court. It was read for 5-6 hours. After Tindale was martyred for translating the Bible, next came Myles Coverdale: 1535, Matthew's Bible: 1537, the Great Bible: 1539 (the Official Bible of England). The Geneva Bible: 1560. Bishop's Bible: 1568. The King James Version came in 1611 and was predominate for 3 centuries, and relied heavily on the Bishop's Bible. The early 1600s was the Golden Age of the English Language: Ex. Shakespeare, formal language.
 - a. The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in the mid-1900s. The New American Standard was written in 1971, revised 1995. The primary goal of the NASB was to translate the very words of the original accurately. The New King James: 1982. ESV: 2001, a literal translation with more smoothness and flair than the NASB.
- 4) **Inspiration**, 8:4, they are the very words of God, letters, and marks that God literally gave to us Himself. It is a weighty thing. The Jews built a large platform for 14 men to take turns reading the word of God. They believed it was weighty and significant.
 - a. The NIV, Revised English, New Living Translation, Good News Translation, and the Message Bible came about in the 20th century.

Two Terms to Know:

Dynamic Equivalence- a theory of translation based upon the assumption that anything in the original text that is unclear, culturally foreign, or unrelatable, that the translation should "reflect" vs. preserve that idea and give the same impact to a later reader.

Essentially Literal Translation- this works to translate the original texts but **not** in a rigid or wooden way that violates the normal rules of grammar and sentence structure. Word order is adjusted according to English grammar, but also fitting into English grammar that creates a transparent text. It is a clear, clean window to see the original Greek & Hebrew text. The English translation is just as inspired as the original text by what is called "derived inspiration" as long as it clearly represents the original text.

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7 Goals given for using “dynamic equivalence:”

- 1) Makes the Bible Contemporary.
- 2) Changes figures of speech into direct statements.
- 3) Blend inspiration into itself. Ex. Losing the original imagery such as in Eccl: 12:5, and the use of “when the almond tree blossoms.”
- 4) Eliminate theological vocabulary. Ex. 1 Tim. 2:6, the word “ransom,” removed.
- 5) Reduce vocabulary level and reducing the meaning of key words. Ex. 1 Sam. 1:3, Elkanah, went to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts – not to reduce the text to a different name such as the “Lord Almighty” as some translations do, because of a difficult term.
- 6) Keep Bible current & relevant, trying to breath new life into the Scriptures. Not needed at all: Heb. 4:12.
- 7) Cater to worst readers in society. This causes a profound ignorance of the original text.

>>Satan is the original twister of God’s Word with Eve.

5) **Respect:** 8:5, “every one stood,” as if they were in the presence of God and did so for 6 hours. It is a curse if God takes His word from us, Micah 3:7 & Amos 8:11-12. A dynamic equivalent is a not a Bible, they were a marketed version for the seeker sensitive movement beginning in the 1970s. The **response** by the people of Israel to the Word of God: 8:6; 9, they worshipped with their face to the ground with weeping and mourning (v9).

What is the belief of a literal translation? A) the ancient work was penned the way God wanted it. B) Desire to say what God said. God uses His Holy Spirit to help His people learn His Word.

6) **Trust:** 8:7, the men and the Levites helped the people understand.

Seven Reasons to Trust a Literal Translation:

1) It is a window to the original. 2) Makes full Bible study possible. 3) Keeps theological terms and concepts. 4) You are reading what Biblical writers actually wrote. 5) Literary reliability of original text is preserved. 6) Dignity of Scripture is preserved. 7) Doctrine of inspiration is honored, 2 Tim. 3:16. The Words of God are spirit and life, Jn. 6:63.

7) **Preaching:** 8:8, 1) They heard the word read. 2) The priests and leaders gave the sense, read clearly for all. 3) The leaders explained the text. – this is expositional preaching.

Further Discussion and Application

What are the hazards of using a “dynamic equivalence translation?” Why must we avoid these types of translations so that we keep the original authorial intent and writings inspired by the Holy Spirit?

How sacred are the Scriptures that have been delivered to us? How should we handle the Word of God and communicate its original text?

How do you apply these 7 key words to your listening of the Word of God and your obedience to it?