

Intro:

Today we are going to discuss the subject:

Choosing a Preaching Bible

Recently we have changed from using the KJV to using the New American Standard Bible in the preaching.

Some of you asked questions about it after a time and I understand that some of you still have questions about it.

There will be ample opportunity for your comments and questions, but first, let's read a passage of Scripture.

Read Neh 8.1-12

Notice in particular the phrase in v. 8 "translating to give the sense". The KJV says simply, "distinctly, and gave the sense". Both of these translations are correct, but what does the NAU bring out that is missing from the KJV?

The word 'translating' vs. the word 'distinctly'... The root meaning of the word is 'to divide' or 'separate'. (The word Pharisee comes from this word.)

In this context it means not simply to speak distinctly but actually to translate.

The Hebrew of the Law was no longer the language of the people – after 70 plus years of captivity in Babylon, the majority of them spoke Aramaic, a language similar to Hebrew, but with differences.

The Levites were translating so the people could understand.

Translating the Bible has a long tradition – this might have been the first instance of it, certainly I think it is the first reference to it.

Some time after this, Jewish scribes in Alexandria, Egypt, translated the OT into Greek. We call this the Septuagint. It is the Bible the apostles, the Lord, and the early church used because most people in the Roman Empire spoke Greek.

Of course, in Palestine they used the Hebrew/Aramaic OT as well (some parts of Daniel and Ezra, for example, are in Aramaic).

So, again, translating is not new, it is something that happens with every generation and across every border.

What we are discussing today is what translation should be used in preaching in our church. How do we arrive at that decision?

I. The current dispute over translations (brief summary)

- A. Original manuscripts long since lost
- B. Multiple hand-written copies preserved over the centuries
 - 1. Bible one of the most well-preserved ancient documents in the world
 - 2. Hebrew text is virtually certain, some minor variations in manuscripts, but really very little (due to Jewish scrupulosity in copying)
 - 3. Greek manuscripts have more differences, but still about 95% without variation
 - 4. Oldest copy known is a few verses of John's Gospel dated at AD 125 (up till now)
 - 5. Recent discovery of a portion of Mark may be earlier than AD 100 (not proven yet)
- C. Over-simplifying: the Greek manuscripts can be grouped into four major 'families'
 - 1. Two main families are the major ones under discussion
 - a. Alexandrian
 - b. Majority (or Received Text – TR)
 - 2. Arguments for both groups rest on un-provable assumptions (but some reasonableness on either side)
- D. There is further dispute over the English translations themselves
 - 1. There are some Liberal translations (New Revised Standard Version, for example)
 - 2. The King James Version has been used by the majority of churches from about 1650 to 1970
 - 3. The modern translations (post 1970) follow the Alexandrian manuscripts as opposed to the KJV following the Received Text
 - 4. Some people consider all modern translations to be suspect for various reasons

II. Critical errors in the dispute

- A. To say that any one English version is inspired like the originals were inspired (as some do of the KJV)
- B. To correct the Greek text by the KJV, as some have done

- C. To claim that it is a sin to use any translation other than the KJV

III. Our recommended versions (long standing list)

- A. King James Version
- B. New King James Version
- C. New American Standard Version
- D. English Standard Version
- E. Also-ran: New International Version (old version – newer versions are gender-neutral) [don't trust Zondervan Publishers]

IV. Our choice of a preaching Bible

- A. 'Giving the sense' – remember that Ezra made sure the people understood the Bible in their own language
 - 1. The KJV is an excellent but older translation
 - 2. The language of the KJV is difficult for some (consider the reading levels on average in our community)
- B. Explaining the KJV words with words already in modern versions
- C. Spending time in the study primarily with the NAU
- D. Preference for verse by verse format – some modern versions are not available in this format
- E. Some concerns about change
 - 1. If you have been a Christian for a long time, your tradition and memory work has been in the KJV
 - 2. Our Sunday School material uses the New King James (a possible option)
 - 3. Change could cause some division among us
- F. Use of a modern version will help keep divisive people (King James Only) out of the congregation

Conclusion:

For these reasons as a whole, I have been using the New American for the last six months or so. I am not entirely settled on this choice, but I have come to prefer it to using the KJV. I have desired to make a change for a long time.