



103 The King James Version

1. No discussion of Bibles would be complete without a review of the king James version. Steeped in tradition, the king James version of the bible has a rich heritage spanning four centuries and remains one of the most revered icons of Christian faith among Bible believers. Recognized as a symbol of dedication and formality the king James bible instills a deep sense of reverence and awe for God. Its seventeenth century language has influenced culture in the western hemisphere and it remains the most successful and influential Bible version to date. Today there are those who demand that only the authorized, king James version be used for reading, study and worship while others argue that its archaic, indecipherable and an antiquated relic that is impossible to understand. In this video we'll examine the translation, its accuracy, usability and relationship to modern translations.

2. The translation was ordered by King James 1 of England in 1604 in the midst of a politically and religiously charged atmosphere. The translators were directed to deliver an honest and accurate rendering of the scriptures that was free of religious and political bias. They were divided into small groups whose work was then evaluated by the other translators. The result in 1611 was a translation that remains one of the most loved, respected and scrutinized of all Bible versions.

3. But is the King James version reliable?

4. When the KJV is compared to source manuscripts the accuracy of the rendering is over 98%. Although not translated from the oldest manuscripts, some of which had not been discovered at the time, the King James version differs only slightly in some areas and none of these are doctrinal concerns. When it comes to reliability, the KJV is one of the most accurate word for word, or formal equivalence translations available. So, if the King James translation is accurate then what's the real problem with it?

5. The difficulty with the version really isn't the translation. The problem is the archaic language and grammatical forms that may confuse readers today. If we look at a replica of the 1611 printing we would find that we would have problems reading the text. Letter forms, word spelling and other things have changed incredibly over the years to the extent that we would have difficulty reading the original as printed. While the KJV has been revised since 1611, and publishers often edit their editions to make them more understandable, the fact remains that the style, wording and expressions found in the KJV are often times not intelligible to modern readers unfamiliar with the text. For that reason the KJV may be an obstacle for new Bible students.

6. But does that mean we shouldn't read or study the KJV?

7. In my opinion there are few versions of the scriptures that possess the beauty, reverence and power of the King James translation. However, new readers will find themselves not only having to grapple with the text of the scriptures and doctrinal concerns but they'll also have to spend time understanding what they are reading in the vernacular of 17th century England. That's not an impossible task but it certainly isn't one everyone will be up to. The King James version is a valid translation to use but shouldn't be the only one. For that reason a



103 The King James Version

more modern translation such as the New King James or New American Standard Bible may be a better choice at least in the beginning. A decision to use the KJV isn't wrong but be prepared to spend some extra time to really understand what you're reading. I'll have more to say about that in a moment.

6. We need to discuss some of the negative attitudes toward the KJV you will hear. The scriptures themselves have things that are difficult to understand and for that reason many teachers steer folks away from the KJV in favor of newer translations, some of which, in my opinion, lack the power and reverence exemplified by the King James. Many of the more modern subjectively influenced thought for thought translations and paraphrase Bibles have detracted from the message of the Bible and do more to obscure the scriptures than clarify them. I believe some of these translations and versions have so diluted the meaning of many passages that compared to other translations they fall far short of conveying what should be there. Some modern translations appear to be an appeal to a wider audience by softening or removing some of the harsher realities contained in God's word and subjectively reinterpreting prophetic elements which also detracts from the power of the message. Ultimately we have to remember that the scriptures originated with God and we should be very careful how we handle them.

7. So, here are some tips for using the King James Version if you decide to do so:

8. First. Read! I can't emphasize enough how important it is to familiarize yourself with the text. Be prepared to spend time with your Bible and gain familiarity with the language. That's an important factor in coming to terms with the King James version and you should spend twice as much time reading it as someone using a modern translation. Remember you're not just getting acquainted with the scriptures, you're also traveling in time and getting a feel for the thought process of the 17th century. Although a number of revisions have taken place over the years to make the text more understandable, the KJV is still quite different from the way we speak and write today.

9. Secondly, have a good dictionary at hand and use it! College level or encyclopedic dictionaries will often give the history of words and if you don't understand what something means check it out. For instance, the word prevent in 1611 meant to go ahead of, or before. Today prevent means to stop something. Also the word cleave in 1611 meant to be joined together. Today, it means to divide or cut something apart. Words like this can be confusing but a good dictionary will help clear that up.

10. Third. Have another translation available for difficult passages or things you don't understand. I've been using the KJV all my life but I frequently consult other translations to clarify passages or terms. In addition to the KJV, I also use the New American Standard Bible, the New King James and occasionally the New International Version. My Bible of choice though for reading and memorization remains the King James but I realize there is a need for comparison at times.

11. Lastly, learn to think contextually and logically. There are passages that may present problems figuring out what is meant but if you think about what's happening you'll understand. One example is the episode in



103 The King James Version

which Laban pursues Jacob because his household idols are missing. Rachel, Laban's younger daughter, is sitting on them in what the KJV refers to as the camel's furniture. OK. So what does that mean? Camels are animals and they don't have houses and certainly don't buy furniture so what's being described here. Rachel is sitting on something related to the camels which is a key that helps us to logically conclude that this is more than likely a saddle or other piece of equipment used in riding. We can then check another translation and see how well we've done. We might have to work a little harder with the KJV but things like this will help us read more critically.

12. If we follow these guidelines the KJV will be a reliable resource we can have confidence in and we can enjoy the beauty of its language.

13. Let's summarize what we've learned

- a. the KJV is a formal equivalence or word for word translation
- b. it has a 98% accuracy in the translation and ...
- c. there are no doctrinal discrepancies in the text when compared to the older sources
- d. it is not impossible to understand but may take some additional work
- e. expresses a reverent tone and formality that some other versions lack
- f. we can rely on the KJV as a solid choice for reading, study and worship if we're willing to put in the effort needed to understand it

14. So if you decide to use the KJV you can be confident that you have a reliable, accurate translation of the scriptures.

15. In the next video I'll talk about how to get or buy a Bible.