

Subtle Deceptions of the New King James Bible

The New King James Bible has been very popular, largely because it has been promoted as a revision of the KJV (Authorised Version), proven and accepted since 1611, and that it is claimed to be faithful to the traditional text. Such statements have been made by the translators in their preface to the NKJV, as we shall see by a few brief quotes shortly. The quotes can be verified by anybody who has a NKJV. Hence, the NKJV is thought by many to be even more accurate than the AV because of its updated language.

Many have accepted these claims at face value. After all, why would anyone think to question such statements which are made by Christian scholars who have expressed a desire to be faithful to the traditional text of the Scriptures?

Of course, we must always be ready, as were the Bereans of old, to “search the scriptures” and thereby “prove all things”. Remember Paul’s sobering words to the Galatians, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” (**Galatians 1:8**) Paul’s doctrine here is that even an angel or an apostle of Christ was not to be trusted merely on his own ‘say-so’, but only as he was faithful to the Scriptures.

Let us then consider some of these claims about the NKJV in the light of the facts:

1. The NKJV Publishers claim it is based on the same texts as the AV (KJV)

*“Because the New King James Version is the fifth revision of this historic document (i.e. The King James New Testament), translated from specific Greek texts, the editors decided to retain the **traditional text** in the body of the New Testament.”*

Firstly, this statement is very misleading because the NKJV Translators actually alter and omit certain words of Scripture, often favouring Roman Catholic doctrine as they do.

Note the following examples of alterations in the NKJV based on the ‘critical text’ (NB: **Not the ‘traditional text’** as is claimed!) There are many more –

- John 1:3 (‘through’ replaces ‘by’),
- Romans 11:32, Hebrews 3:18, 4:6, 4:11 (4 cases of ‘disobedience’ replacing ‘unbelief’) – This particularly accommodates the Roman Catholic progressive gospel of salvation by works.
- Galatians 5:22 (‘faithfulness’ replaces ‘faith’) – works/progressive concept
- Ephesians 2:8 (‘have been saved’ replaces ‘are saved’) c.f. 1 Peter 1:23 (‘having been born again’) – works/progressive concept
- Ephesians 4:22 (‘grows corrupt’ replaces ‘is corrupt’) – works/progressive concept
- 1 Corinthians 1:18, 2 Corinthians 2:15 (‘are being saved’ replaces ‘are saved’) c.f. 1 John 2:8, Acts 15:19, Mark 10:24, Hebrews 10:14 – works/progressive concept
- 2 Corinthians 2:17 (‘peddling’ replaces ‘corrupt’)
- 2 Thessalonians 2:7 “he who now letteth will let” (NKJV – ‘He’ – This interprets the text)
- 2 Timothy 2:15 (‘be diligent’ replaces ‘study’), c.f. 1 Timothy 4:15 – works/progressive concept
- Hebrews 2:16 (‘He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham’ replaces ‘took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham’)
- Deuteronomy 23:17, 1 Kings 15:12, 22:46, 2 Kings 23:7 (‘perverted persons’ replaces ‘sodomites’)
- In numerous cases ‘hell’ is changed to ‘sheol’ or ‘hades’ (English speaking people know what ‘hell’ means, but ‘sheol’ or ‘hades’ have pagan connotations)

Secondly, this statement (that the NKJV is merely a ‘revision’ of the KJV) is misleading as footnotes are added which refer the reader to an entirely different Greek Text (‘NU’ – Nestles United Bible Societies)! This is known as the ‘Critical Text’. It therefore matters little that the traditional text is mainly followed, if on almost every page, doubt is cast upon it by footnotes which point the reader to the Critical Text and imply that these readings should be ‘corrected’ accordingly!

2. The NKJV Publishers claim that the New Testament of the AV (KJV) is basically the same as all others.

“There is only one basic New Testament used by Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Orthodox. (Absolutely false!) Minor variations in hand copying have appeared through the centuries, before mechanical printing began about AD 1450. Some variations exist in the spelling of Greek words, in word order, and in similar details. These ordinarily do not show up in translation and do not affect the sense of the text in any way. Other manuscript differences, regarding the omission or inclusion of a word or a clause, as well as two

paragraphs in the gospels, should not overshadow the overwhelming degree of agreement which exists among the ancient records.”

“Bible readers may be assured that the most important differences in the English New Testament of today are due, not to manuscript divergence, but to the way in which translators view the task of translation.”

Dean John Burgon was one of the men of the ‘Revised Version Committee’ of 1881 and he was one of only two who spoke out strongly against the changes that were being made to the text. From the 1881 Revised Version on, the ‘**Received Text**’ has been abandoned by all modern English translators in favour of the ‘**Critical Text**’, which was produced by the RV Committee under the direction of Wescott and Hort, and is continually evolving. As far as English translations are concerned, the Authorised Version is unique in that it is based only on the Received Text. And the difference between the Critical Text and the Received Text number many thousands, as Burgon’s research abundantly shows!

3. The NKJV Publishers claim it is a revision of the AV (KJV)

“Because the New King James Version is the fifth revision of this historic document ...” – When the evidence is considered, we find this to be a very misleading statement, if not a blatant lie.

As we are faced with the so-called science of textual criticism, the advocates of which can apparently brush aside multiplied thousands of errors and omissions as mere unimportant detail, let us carefully consider what the Scriptures teach us about their accuracy:

- *“Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4)* – (plenary and verbal inspiration – providential preservation is implied as man shall live by them)
- *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:” (2 Timothy 3:16)* – (plenary and verbal inspiration – providential preservation is implied as man shall live by them)
- *“As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.” (Isaiah 59:21)* – (plenary and verbal inspiration and providential preservation)
- *“The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. (Psalms 12:6)* – (plenary and verbal inspiration) *“Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.” (Psalms 12:7)* – (providential preservation)
- *“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” (Matthew 5:18)* – (plenary and verbal inspiration and providential preservation)
- *“Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.” (Proverbs 30:6)* (God’s means of providential preservation revealed – His servants)
- *“Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.” (Deuteronomy 4:2)* (God’s means of providential preservation revealed – His servants, not unbelieving scholars)
- *“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 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 22:18-19)*

If it was not for such plain references to the fact that we can count on having literally every word of Scripture available to us for all generations, perhaps these statements by scholars might be somewhat plausible. But such scholars seem to have a completely different mindset from what most believers have from simply reading and believing their Bibles.

The truth is that there are two very different Greek texts used by translators and hence, two diametrically opposed schools of thought on what actually constitutes the New Testament. The different texts differ in literally thousands of places, many of them having serious doctrinal implications!

The NKJV cannot honestly and accurately be described as a revision of the Authorised Version.

The NKJV, (as other Modern Versions), makes inaccurate changes to pronouns

The pronoun 'you' is now used as either singular or plural, whereas 'thou', 'thy', and 'thee' are singular and 'ye' and 'you' are plural. Because the older forms – 'thou', 'thee', 'ye' – are no longer used in modern English, the modern translations actually change the meaning of the Scriptures by dropping the more specific older forms. Some important examples are:

- Jesus, speaking to the woman of Samaria, said, "Thou (singular) hast had five husbands", and, "Ye worship ye know not what" (plural) – even though He spoke to the one woman. This makes the meaning clear – that He was not referring only to the personal religion of the woman but to the national religion of Samaria. (**John 4**)
- Likewise, when He spoke to Nicodemus; there were only Jesus and Nicodemus speaking together but Jesus said, "Ye receive not our witness" (**John 3**). Jesus was particularly referring to the Pharisees, for Nicodemus was said in verse one to be "a man of the Pharisees". The point here is that the religious leaders altogether, not just Nicodemus, were rejecting the gospel testimony.
- **Mark 14:37-38**, Jesus speaks firstly to Simon, then to all.
- In **Luke 23:43**, Jesus addressed the penitent thief personally, "I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."
- **Acts 1:8**, "ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." (plural). The gift was to all believers.
- **1 Corinthians 3:16**, "Ye are the temple of God" (plural). The doctrine here is that the Church (the body – not just an individual) is the temple of God. Similarly, **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**, **Colossians**, **Galatians 5:16-18**. Paul is speaking to the body, not just to individuals.

As we can see, a brief consideration of some of these most obvious problems with the NKJV shows that the NKJV reflects the doctrinal bias of its translators and accommodates serious doctrinal error. Those who read it and rely on it are subtly but surely having their doctrinal foundations changed according to those errors. This is cause for great concern. In fact it is the cause of great apostacy from the faith throughout the churches! The author of these notes has found by personal experience that there are people who have been in the faith for decades, who are sincere and devout evangelical, Bible-believing Christians, who have been confused about what the Bible teaches about justification by faith as opposed to a progressive salvation or justification by works, and that that very confusion has been caused by an exclusive use of the NKJV.

The logic is very simple: what we accept and read daily as the 'Word of God', we believe. Therefore, if we are daily reading verses that say we are 'being saved', that concept of progressive (Roman Catholic) salvation by works corrupts our understanding. When the preacher says, quoting the AV, "We are saved", such evangelical believers say to themselves, "That's right but the Bible also says I am being saved." But we must ask, "Which Bible?" New Bibles are therefore the cause of much double-mindedness in the Church because they actually contradict themselves, but more importantly, in many places they contradict and misrepresent the Scriptures.

If we are wise we will not be aiding and abetting those who "*corrupt the word of God*" (**2 Corinthians 2:17**), but we will stick to faithful and accurate Bible translations, and be part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

On this particular issue, the NKJV, the booklet, "What Today's Christian Needs To Know About The New King James Version", published by the Trinitarian Bible Society, is highly recommended.