

DO YOU SEEK THE TRUTH OR SHORT-CHANGE YOURSELF?

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Published On : March 14, 2025

Last Updated : May 16, 2025

Introduction, A Bold But Foolish Claim, Divine Inspiration Of The Scriptures, The Tanakh, The Widespread Usage Of The Septuagint, Languages Of The First Century, The Benefit Of Knowing Hebrew And Greek Words Behind English Translations, Victor Hugo's "Les Misérables", Challenges With Translation Process, No English Bible Is A Perfect Translation, Use The Lexicons With Caution, Search The Scriptures, Dependence On God's Holy Spirit, Widespread Deception In Online Christian Community, Test The Spirits For Biblical Accuracy, Spreading Deception Online, Humility And A Strong Hunger To Know The Scriptural Truth, Defend Misguided Pet Doctrines Or Embrace The Truth, Forsake Misguided Ideas, Conclusion, Reading List

While scrolling through my Facebook news feed recently, I came across the following surprising -- and I might add, misguided -- message which had been posted by one of my friends:

--- Begin Quote ---

"Saying you need the 'original languages' to study scripture is both foolish and unscriptural."

--- End Quote ---

To say the least, my jaw dropped when I read the previous comment. Sadly, this was not the first time that I had seen this same individual make such controversial statements. For reasons which I will now clearly explain to you, I strongly disagreed with what my friend had posted. Thus, I proceeded to ask him with what divine right and authority he had made such a bold statement. After that, I proceeded to share the following three verses with my friend, which will no doubt be very familiar to many of my online Christian friends:

"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, KJV

"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

2 Peter 1:20-21, KJV

So tell me, my friends. Exactly what prophecies, and what Scriptures do you think those three verses are referring to? Yes, it is a rhetorical question, and I will now provide you with the correct answer. Being as the complete Bible -- and even much less the English translation of the Bible -- had obviously not yet been written or compiled at the time that those verses were written, they must therefore be referring to either the Hebrew Bible -- referred to as the Tanakh -- which more or less corresponds to our Old Testament, or else to the Greek Septuagint, or possibly even to both.

For those of my readers who may possibly not be aware of it, the Septuagint -- which is also abbreviated as simply LXX -- is a Greek translation of the Tanakh, which was translated in Alexandria in the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt during the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. It was widely embraced by the Christian Church of the First Century AD. As I have explained before, Aramaic -- or Syriac -- and Koine Greek -- or common Greek -- were in fact the two major languages which were spoken by the Israelites during the time of the First Century.

If you are wondering why Aramaic was so widely spoken during the First Century -- and before that time as well -- you may be interested in reading my seven-part series entitled "The Fruits of Disobedience". In it, I discuss the circumstances surrounding the Assyrian invasion of Northern Israel, as had been prophesied by Isaiah, and some of the other Prophets. As you may already know, even Jesus Himself spoke Aramaic, being as He was raised in the village of Nazareth in the region of Galilee in northern Israel. You may recall that even as Jesus died on the Cross, He spoke Aramaic with the following words:

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Matthew 27:46, KJV

But as for Hebrew, it may surprise some of you to know that

very few Israelites read and spoke it during that time. At any rate, we can agree that the Books of the Old Testament are quite obviously the prophecies and Scriptures that were inspired by God according to the aforementioned verses. So these are the words which were understood, not by modern English speakers, but rather by the Israelites of the First Century, as well as by the Hellenistic Jews who adopted the customs, dress and language of the Greeks.

So what is my point in sharing this information with you? It is to first of all state that while the original languages may not be absolutely needed by modern-day readers -- being as we obviously now have English translations of the Bible -- nevertheless, knowing the original Hebrew and Koine Greek words -- and their definitions -- which are behind each of our English translations, can most definitely be beneficial in increasing our understanding regarding what certain Bible verses mean.

To me personally, for anyone to deny this -- as my Facebook friend basically did -- strikes me as being rather foolish. Let me give you a relatable example. Some of my readers are no doubt very familiar with well-known French author Victor Hugo's 1862 historical novel "Les Misérables". Not only has it been translated into many different languages, but it has been adapted to film, stage, television, and even a musical.

Now even though you may be a native English speaker, if you happen to be a fan of Victor Hugo's literary work, and if you are also fluent in French as a second language, wouldn't you be the least bit curious to know what subtle differences might possibly exist between the English translation and the original French version by Victor Hugo? Wouldn't you in fact consider the French version to be the PURE version, being as it came directly from the author himself?

Now apply this same principle to reading the Old and the New Testaments in the original Hebrew and Koine Greek languages, or at the very least using Hebrew and Greek lexicons as you read your English KJV Bible. So now can you understand the benefit of doing this? Of course, if you happen to be a KJV Bible extremist, while you may not like to hear this, the fact of the matter is that sometimes accurate meanings and nuances can be lost during the translation process from the original Hebrew and Greek languages, to another language, such as English. In certain cases, there are no equivalent words from one language to the other.

In fact, this does NOT just happen with Bible translations. It actually occurs with the translation of a lot of ancient manuscripts. As I said, you need to understand that there are some very ancient words in different non-English texts which simply don't have an exact equivalent in the English language. As such, it can be challenging to convey the same exact meaning in English. Any experienced translator will tell you this.

Now, similar to my misguided online friend who made that rather silly statement, some of you can debate, argue and refute this point as much as you like. Nevertheless, it is a point of fact which, similar to many other serious students of the Bible, I eventually and personally came to recognize after decades of being a dedicated student of the KJV Bible. I used to think in the exact same way as my friend, and as many other KJV Bible extremists still think. "What do I need any lexicons for? Why do I need any extra-biblical sources? I've got my KJV, and that is good enough for me!" However, I was wrong.

In short, as difficult as it may be for some of my readers to accept, the simple truth of the matter is that no English translation of the Bible is an absolute, perfect translation of the original Scriptures and languages. Why not? Because they are all the work of fallible men who each had or have their personal biases, preferences, prejudices and doctrinal leanings. These things inevitably creep in and affect their translation work, either on a conscious or on a subconscious level.

It is for that reason that when I am uncertain regarding the meaning of a particular Bible verse, I will not hesitate to refer to both Hebrew and Koine Greek lexicons, in order to discover the original Hebrew or Greek word which is used in the verse, along with their definitions. And even then, I do so with caution, because over the years I have learned that as occurs with the Bible translations themselves, personal doctrinal leanings can creep into the lexicons as well. So I do urge a degree of caution when using lexicons.

Yet at the same time, let me tell you my dear friends, that I have gained such a deeper understanding of God's Word by relying upon the practice of using lexicons on quite a few occasions over the past five decades. Let me also add that the Holy Scriptures themselves admonish us to "search the

Scriptures" and to "study to show thyself approved" so that we can arrive at the truth. Tell me, my friends. What can be better than searching in the original languages in order to garner the most accurate meaning of a verse? Consider the following group of Bible verses:

"SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

John 5:39, KJV

"STUDY TO SHOW THYSELF APPROVED UNTO GOD, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

2 Timothy 2:15, KJV

"And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY, whether those things were so."

Acts 17:10-11, KJV

Now, some Christians will no doubt argue "Well, I have the Holy Spirit to lead and guide me into all truth, exactly as Jesus promised. So I do not need the original languages or Hebrew and Greek lexicons." You are correct. Jesus did in fact say that, as we can easily determine by the following two verses:

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

John 14:26, KJV

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."

John 16:13, KJV

I absolutely agree with both of those verses. However, at the same time, we need to recognize that the problem today is that there is a lot of deception in the world, and it grows worse with each passing year. This occurs not only in the secular world, but sadly, and to our own shame, within

the Christian Church as well. As a result, there are many prideful Christians today who make the very same claim as my friend did. They say, "Oh, I have got the Spirit, and that is all that I really need. I don't need lexicons or any other extra-biblical sources."

Tragically, by simply browsing some of the social networks, and observing some of the outlandish and nonsensical stuff that some Christians post, it is easy to see that while such Christians may claim to be hearing from God, or being led by the Holy Spirit in their understanding, it is rather evident that they are doing no such thing. In fact, I've encountered many such individuals over the years who have clearly been deceived by their own mind, heart or pride. It may be the spirit, but it is most certainly not God's Holy Spirit that is influencing their thoughts. As I have mentioned before, we need to test the spirits. We need to test the words that are written or spoken, and make absolutely certain that they are in agreement with the Scriptures, exactly as the people of Berea did. Following are two more related Bible verses:

"Prove [test, examine] all things; hold fast that which is good."

1 Thessalonians 5:21, KJV

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

1 John 4:1, KJV

Sadly, when some of the aforementioned misguided people fail to follow this practice, the end result is that not only are they terribly deceived themselves, but to make matters even worse, they are likewise deceiving other gullible Christians in the process when they decide to share their foolish and misguided nonsense online, exactly as the Apostle Paul wrote in the following verse:

"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."

2 Timothy 3:13, KJV

My friends, that is the alarming truth of the situation. I will be honest and tell you that I'm now at a point where I can hardly stand to even be on Facebook, because there are just so many false doctrines everywhere. Hardly a day goes by that I do not cringe as I scroll down my news feed. I

constantly encounter this type of doctrinal nonsense. In many cases, I really have to hold myself back and not say anything, because I already know from the long time that I have been friends with some people, that they won't accept what I have to say. They will simply buck against it and tell me that they are right and I am wrong. So what is the point?

Such prideful people! They have no humility whatsoever. It seems that some of them are more interested in defending a certain pet doctrine, than in really knowing the truth. It simply amazes me. My friends, we should all be hungry for the Scriptural truth, and if some doctrine we have embraced turns out to be wrong, then we should have the humility to forsake it once it is exposed. Personally, in my own life I have been forced to forsake certain old ideas and doctrines on a number of occasions. I strive to remain open to the truth. The truth is more important to me than my personal pride. How about you? I discuss this issue in some of the articles which are listed at the end of this same article.

So in conclusion, contrary to the erroneous claim which was made by my online friend who said that it is foolish to look into the original languages, and even unscriptural to do so according to him, I believe that I've demonstrated through a number of Bible verses and easy-to-understand examples, how misguided my friend's assertion really is. In my view, not only is he short-changing himself, but by promoting such a misguided position, he is likewise short-changing any other Christians who may choose to follow his unwise advice.

With these thoughts, I will bring this article to a close. It is my hope that you've found it informative and enlightening, and I pray that it has been a blessing in your life as well. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr or with any other social network, I would really appreciate if you'd take the time to click or tap on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information and further study, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were either mentioned in this article, or which contain topics which are related to this article. All of these articles are likewise located on the Bill's Bible Basics web server. To read these articles, simply click or tap on any link you see below.

Are You Flexible?

Facebook False Prophets and Misguided Teachers

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Humility in Our Understanding of God's Word

In Defense of the KJV Bible

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My Evolving Theology

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Should Christians Engage in Doctrinal Debates?

The Fruits of Disobedience

Understanding the Bible in Context

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