



## *Bibles Today*

For 300 years the King James Version of the Bible was used almost exclusively by the English language church, until the major updates of the English Revised Version and the American Standard Bibles of 1885 and 1901, respectively.

In 1947, the discovery of Dead Sea Scrolls marked another major advancement in textual scholarship. Having Old Testament manuscripts that date 1000 years older than anything we had previously has enabled scholars to greatly update the Hebrew Bible (O.T.). An endless stream of updates and new translations have been the result.

The Revised Standard Version of 1952 (RSV) was an excellent translation, but it came so close on the heels of the Dead Sea discovery that it was not able to take full advantage of the new research. The New American Standard Bible of 1971 (NASB) updated the 1901 effort and continues the stream of “literal translations.” Similarly, the King James Version was given a major revision in 1982 (NKJV). And the New Revised Standard came out in 1990 (NRSV).

The most popular translation over the last 30 years has been the New International Version of 1979 (NIV). It marks the best effort thus far to communicate the meaning and intention of the original languages without using wooden and difficult to read “literal” grammatical structures. This translation approach is called “dynamic equivalence.” Several other modern language Bibles have been published just recently, but the verdict is still out concerning whether or not any of them will catch on with wide

appeal. These include the English Standard Version (ESV) and the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB).

There are several paraphrases of the Bible that are very popular, as well. These include, The Living Bible and The Message. It is important to remember that neither of these claim to be literal or accurate in their communication of the Bible’s message. While they are interesting to read, they probably should not be considered “God’s Word.”

So much more could be said on this subject!

**One last point—a very important point!** Among conservative Bible believers there have been long and heated debates over which translation is best—or even the only acceptable one. This has sadly caused much division among God’s people. There are still some “King James only” churches, but thankfully most of this narrowness has given way to a more informed recognition of the complex issues involved in translating the Bible into languages other than the originals.

Some translations claim to be more “literal” while others open admit to being more “dynamic.” Some claim a “word for word” approach while other a “thought for thought” approach. As one for studied Greek for years, won awards for my efforts, and still considers it incredibly difficult to read, I will state my humble opinion that there really are no “literal” translations. There are better ones, and worse, but they are all a big step away from the original languages of Greek and Hebrew. The ancient languages just work so differently and are structured so differently in their grammar than modern English that all translations have to be “thought for thought.”

Furthermore, I believe that all of the main-stream translations are excellent. The scholars have done an amazing job in bringing God’s Word to us in English. We are indebted to them.

As I have said so many times before, “The best Bible is the one that is open in your lap.” It is indeed a blessing to have God’s Word in a form that we can all read. Thank you, Jesus!

*Scott*