

# Ancient Languages and KJV Bible Translation - Part 1

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It has come to my attention that there may possibly be some Christians who do not understand the purpose of italicized words in the Holy Scriptures, meaning of course, the Bible. Thus, for the sake of anyone who does not know the reason behind this practice, I have written the following article. It likewise discusses some of the other unique features and aspects of the beloved Authorized King James Version of the Holy Bible -- which is commonly referred to as the AKJV, or simply as the KJV -- which relate to the translation process and structure such as word capitalization, punctuation and spelling, and chapter and verse division. Language lexicons are likewise discussed. This article will also explain how even one misplaced comma can alter the meaning of a verse.

To begin with, if you are an individual who happens to use Hebrew and Greek lexicons in your personal Bible studies, in conjunction with Strong's Numbers, you may be surprised to

discover that none of the words which are in italics in the text appear to have an equivalent representation in either Hebrew or Koine Greek in the lexicons, depending on whether you are reading the Old Testament or the New Testament.

But let's back up for a moment, shall we? For those of my readers who may not be familiar with the word "lexicon", in the simplest of terms, and for the purpose of this article -- there exist other meanings -- a lexicon constitutes the whole vocabulary of a particular language. It is in fact an inventory of all the words -- or lexemes -- that comprise a language. A lexeme is a basic lexical unit of a language -- whether it is English, Spanish, French or whatever -- and consists of a single word, or even several words which are considered as an abstract unit.

A lexicon not only includes the standard words which pertain to a specific language, but also jargon, idioms, slang words, and specialized terms which are used for even more effective communication. A lexicon is a fundamental and essential part of a language's structure, often seen as the collection of words, while grammar is actually the system that is used for combining those same words into phrases and sentences.

For serious students of the Bible who may not be fluent in the Hebrew and Greek languages themselves, lexicons serve as essential tools which can enhance our understanding of God's Word. Sometimes, when there is a verse of Scripture which we may not fully understand, resorting to the use of Hebrew and Greek lexicons can help to clarify what may be lacking in our understanding. As it turns out, most modern Bible apps now include what are referred to as Strong's Numbers. This is an index system that was created by nineteenth century American theologian, Bible scholar and lexicographer James Strong in his Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, which is generally referred to as simply Strong's Concordance. Strong published his concordance in 1890 and many Christians have indeed been blessed by his work since that time. I most certainly have.

In the King James Bible, each root word in the English text is assigned a specific number. In turn, the index numbers are linked to words and definitions which are found in the Hebrew or Greek lexicon, depending on which Testament the Bible student is reading at the time. As of this writing, collectively speaking, there are about 14,300 words which have been assigned Strong's Numbers. In my own life, I am constantly referring to the lexicons, and I can personally

testify to the fact that doing so has greatly enhanced my own understanding of the Scriptures over the decades.

Sadly, based on my personal online experiences, it seems that some Christians are very hesitant to -- or even firmly resist -- using language lexicons. In my opinion, the Christians who do this do themselves a disservice. Many years ago, I thought just as they still do. In other words, I assumed that merely reading the black and white text that was in front of my eyes was good enough. In fact, I used to share this belief in some of my early articles, until I woke up to the truth. Thus, I was eventually forced to update a few of my articles so as to reflect my new and wiser perspective.

My friends, in many cases the surface text is indeed enough. However, in other cases it is not. Do you know why? Because in some cases different Hebrew and Koine Greek words are all translated as the same exact word in English, while the truth of the matter is that in their original languages, the words may have very different meanings. A case in point is the word "hell", which I amply explain in my series called "Hell, the Lake of Fire, and Universalism". If you ask most Christians today about hell, they will immediately respond that it is a fiery place associated with torment and eternal damnation. In fact, they will even point to specific Bible verses which mention this.

However, guess what, my friends? While there is indeed such a terrible place -- which even Jesus mentions in His parable regarding Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16 -- that simply is NOT what the word "hell" means in every place where it is found in the Bible. That is because, as I mentioned a moment ago, in the original languages of the Bible, different words are used. However, unless you employ language lexicons, you will never know that. What is the end result? You will come away with a warped understanding of the Scriptures.

Allow me to give you two very clear examples where this issue can -- and in fact does -- occur. In the Book of Acts, while he was preaching, the Apostle Peter quoted the following Old Testament prophecy regarding Jesus' burial and resurrection:

"Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."

Psalms 16:9-10, KJV

As I just mentioned, we find this prophecy's New Testament counterpart in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, as we can easily determine by the following two verses in chapter two:

"Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."

Acts 2:26-27, KJV

Is that prophecy talking about Jesus descending into a fiery place of torment and eternal damnation? My friends, no it is most certainly not! But as I already said, so many Christians who don't use the aforementioned study tools won't know that. Thus, they will read those two verses and walk away believing that while He was dead, Jesus descended to a fiery place of torment and eternal damnation, which is simply not true. On the other hand, if one uses Hebrew and Greek lexicons, he'll suddenly be enlightened and learn the truth. Exactly what is that truth? It is the following.

In Psalm 16:10, the word "hell" is derived from the ancient Hebrew word "sheol". Do you know what that word means? Well, it certainly does not mean a place filled with howling demons and fire and brimstone. By the way, brimstone is another word for sulphur. "Sheol" simply refers to the underworld of the dead. In other words, my friends, the inside of the earth and the very pit of one's own grave. That is it. No hellfire! No torment and eternal damnation! The Hebrew word "sheol" is in fact translated a total of 31 times as grave, 3 times as pit, and 31 times as hell. However, they are ALL referring to the same thing. That is to say, the common grave, and nothing more. Please notice what else the same prophecy states:

"my flesh also shall rest in hope."

What? Wait a second! If "hell" in those verses means a fiery place of torment and eternal damnation as so many misguided churches have taught for centuries, then how in the world can a person's flesh rest there? It is totally impossible, right? Until you realize what the word "hell" really means in those verses. Then we come to the next important words which appear in the prophecy. That is the following:

"to see corruption."

So is that phrase really talking about burning up in hellfire and brimstone and screaming your lungs out as your poor flesh melts while demons taunt you and howl at you? Nope! Sorry my friends, but that is NOT the case. The Hebrew word used there is "shachath" which means corruption, pit, destruction, ditch or grave. Again, there is no mention of hellfire, brimstone or torment! So what in the world is going on here?! First of all, "shachath" is only translated as "destruction" two times. But even if we were to choose that word as the primary definition of "shachath" -- which it is not -- it STILL is NOT referring to destruction by hellfire and brimstone while we listen to a chorus of howling demons who prod us with their pitchforks.

My friends, please remember exactly what "sheol" is and where this body is laying: in a regular grave. So what happens in a regular grave? Well, it should come as no surprise that the patriarch Job informs us quite plainly what the answer is with this wonderful promise:

"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."  
Job 19:25-27, KJV

Thus, we see that the corruption to which the prophecy in the Book of Psalms is actually referring, is NOT destruction by hellfire, but rather the NATURAL slow decay of the human body in a regular grave, which results from bacteria, worms, and other parasites which feed upon it. That is it! Again, there's absolutely no mention of hellfire, terrible torment or eternal damnation. Please likewise note that where Job says "though my reins be consumed within me", the word "reins" refers to Job's internal organs which are rotting and decaying, and coming to their end. That is all.

Thus, we come to understand that when the Apostle Peter shares the prophecy from the Book of Psalms with his listeners, he is plainly and clearly telling them that they witnessed the very fulfillment of that prophecy, some of them with their very own eyes. Why? Because even though Jesus laid in that tomb for a period of three full days and nights, His physical body most certainly did NOT see corruption. In other words, it did NOT decay. Furthermore, as the Apostle Paul wrote in his Epistle to the brethren at Corinth, Jesus was seen alive by many of

the brethren, including five hundred of them at one time, as we can see by the following group of Bible verses:

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."

1 Corinthians 15:3-8, KJV

In contrast, consider what Martha -- one of the two sisters of Jesus' friend Lazarus -- said to Jesus when He commanded them to roll away the cover stone from Lazarus' tomb:

"Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days."

John 11:39, KJV

As I explain in a few other articles, let me also mention that throughout the Scriptures, it appears that the word "soul" may NOT always mean one's spirit or life force. Sometimes it also seems to refer to the actual physical body -- also referred to as one's temple, building or tabernacle -- which really houses our spirit. In other words, our body is merely a container or a vessel for our spirit -- or life force -- which we receive from God. Let me share with you a final example which reveals how easily the word "hell" can be misunderstood. If the word "hell" always refers to a fiery place of torment and eternal damnation, then how in the world do we explain the following well-known verse which is found in the Book of Revelation:

"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."

Revelation 20:14, KJV

What? Let me get this straight. So a fiery place of torment is cast into yet another fiery place of torment? Does that really make any sense at all? I don't think so! But guess what? When we take a moment to utilize a Greek lexicon, we discover that the Koine Greek word which is used in the previous verse is "hades". This Koine Greek word has the same exact meaning as the Hebrew word "sheol" in the Old Testament. Do you remember

what that meaning is? It is the underworld of the dead, and the common grave. So thus we see that death and the grave are both thrown into the Lake of Fire, thus ending them once and for all, because as we are told in Revelation 21:5, "Behold, I make all things new."

So while some KJV Bible extremists may not like to hear this -- due to the fact that they are convinced that the KJV Bible is totally inerrant -- the fact remains that translating all of those Hebrew and Koine Greek words as "hell" -- there are maybe five to seven of them; please refer to the series "Hell, the Lake of Fire and Universalism" for the details -- was in my personal view, sloppy exegesis. Or maybe the religionists of organized religion did it on purpose in order to control people through fear. Whatever the case may be, please think about this carefully. Everything I just shared with you, many Christians do NOT understand. Why not? Because they only want to read the black and white surface text, and resist using Hebrew and Greek lexicons. I hope that I have convinced some of you to do otherwise.

Having now explained to you the concepts of lexicons and Strong's Numbers, and their importance to serious students of God's Word, let us return now to our former discussion regarding italicized words in the KJV Bible. Of course, the first and most natural question to ask is why these words exist at all. Some cautious Christians may possibly wonder if some kind of intentional deception is being practiced here. If you happen to be one such individual, relax, my friend. I assure you that nothing unseemly whatsoever is happening here.

The simple fact of the matter is that translation from any ancient language to any modern language is not always such a straightforward, easy and simple task. Why is this? In this case, I will be using my own native English language as our example. One reason is simply because some ancient words do NOT have an equivalent in our modern English language. As a result, translators have to do the best they can with it, to try to express the same meaning and thought in English for our benefit.

It is precisely for this reason that sometimes while you are conducting your Bible studies and using lexicons, you may be surprised to discover a string of English words in the AKJV -- which is my Bible of preference -- for example, which is translated from just a single Hebrew or Koine Greek word. In

such a case, the translators are simply trying to do the best they can to translate that Hebrew or Koine Greek word in a manner that adheres as closely as possible to the meaning of the original word, while at the same time, still making sense to the English reader. Sometimes this requires using several words in English to express the same meaning and thought that is found in a single Hebrew or Greek word. That is the gist of it.

And then we come to those words or phrases in the English text which have no representation whatsoever in the original Hebrew or Koine Greek text. So what in the world is going on with that? Simply put, these are words or phrases which were added by the translators for the sake of CLARIFICATION, and to join different words and phrases together. Without them, the English text might not make sense to the English reader. In fact, the English text might seem broken, or confusing, as if the Bible verse is lacking something to create a more cohesive thought. In short, the added words are just to help the verse to flow in one continuous thought.

So again, to overcome this difficulty in translation, and to assist us in our understanding, the translators add special helper words to the English text. In addition to this, they PURPOSELY place such words in italics so that they stand out and so that you the reader know that they were added by the translators for the aforementioned reasons and purpose. To reiterate, there is simply no intention to deceive anyone. After all, if there was such an intention, then they would not even place the words in italics. Instead, those added words would just be plain text like the rest of the words so that they blend in more easily.

To add further difficulty and confusion to the translation process, as some of my readers will know, the fact of the matter is that not all Bible versions are translated from the same original sources. As I point out in a few other of my Bill's Bible Basics articles, we obviously no longer have the autographs. That is to say, the original manuscripts as they were written by Moses, the Prophets, the Apostles, etc. They were lost to us many centuries ago due to a variety of reasons such as natural decay, fire, intentional destruction, or due to some other reason.

As a result, all we really have today are copies of copies of copies. And therein lies another problem. Not all ancient copies are the same. Some of the scribes would add marginal

notes and words when the original text was not clear in its meaning. However, over the centuries, some of those marginal words would accidentally -- or intentionally in some cases -- slip into the main body of text, and thus be accepted as a part of the original text, even though it was really no such thing.

The end result is that there have now been ongoing, endless debates amongst theologians and translators for literally centuries -- going back as far as the time of the so-called early "Church Fathers" -- regarding which text may possibly be spurious -- or false, fake -- text, and which text is the actual true original text. In fact, in my article entitled "Controversy: Matthew 28:19 and the Trinitarian Phrase", I discuss one such long-running debate, which you may find to be interesting -- or perhaps challenging -- reading. You'll find it listed at the end of this same article with a link.

Some translators have tried to overcome some of these issues by creating Bible versions which are as literal as possible from the Hebrew and Koine Greek languages. One such example is Young's Literal Translation, which strives to retain the original verb tenses, word order, and other things, as it is found in early manuscripts such as the Textus Receptus which was compiled by the Dutch theologian, Desiderius Erasmus. As a result, the 19th century Scottish publisher Robert Young's translation is not as easy to read as the KJV Bible in some instances.

However, that is precisely the point. The beloved KJV Bible was intentionally translated in such a way so as to be both graceful, beautiful, poetic and easy to read and understand for people of that 17th century time period. In fact, it is commonly believed that the KJV translation was directly and heavily influenced by William Shakespeare himself.

Some of my readers may have also noticed that even between different versions of the Authorized KJV Bible, there may be a difference with regard to which words are put in italics. Why does this happen? While some people may believe that the difference results in conflict, I don't believe that it does. Let me share my personal reasoning with you. Following the publication of the original version of the KJV Bible in 1611, there were FOUR major revisions, with the 1769 edition being the final major revision. The purpose of each of these four revisions was NOT to corrupt the 1611 KJV Bible, but rather to IMPROVE it by correcting printing errors, spelling errors,

to standardize words, etc. In short, to make it better and more readable.

In fact, I follow the very same practice with my articles. I may write something, and then a number of years later, I will revisit it, carefully proofread it looking for errors, edit it and correct any mistakes I may discover in it, in order to make the article even better. In other words, my BBB articles improve with age similar to a good wine. This is particularly true when I happen to acquire new insights and understanding, or realize that one of my former beliefs was a little -- or maybe even a lot -- off the mark. In such a case, I will not hesitate to update it. As I point out in some of the articles which are listed at the end of this same article, I strive to remain flexible, open and humble in my understanding. After all, sharing the truth is more important to me than clinging to a mistaken belief due to my pride.

So I believe that the KJV Bible revisions did the same thing. Different errors were fixed, and as new information surfaced, perhaps the translators and publishers realized that certain words that were italicized, should not have been, and vice versa as well. At any rate, following is a short list of the four major revisions which have been done to the original 1611 Authorized King James Bible:

1629 -- first Cambridge edition

1638 -- second Cambridge edition, considered a "corrected" version

1762 -- Cambridge edition by Dr. F.S. Paris

1769 -- Oxford edition by Dr. Benjamin Blayney

But words in italics are NOT the only unique thing about the Authorized King James Version of the Bible. There's also the issue of capitalizing words. According to my online research, ancient Hebrew did not use uppercase and lowercase letters. It was all a single case. As a result, the capitalization of some words -- outside of proper names -- was done solely at the discretion of the later English translators. In a very similar fashion, Koine Greek was written in all uppercase letters. Thus, it seems that in the case of both Hebrew and Koine Greek, whether or not to capitalize certain words was an editorial decision which was made by the translators and the publishers themselves during that time period.

Initially, I wondered if those decisions were based on their own personal biases, political views and doctrinal leanings. After all, those things have been influential forces for a very long time, centuries in fact. However, as I dug deeper into this subject, a different picture emerged, as I will now explain to you. According to what I have read, capitalization decisions in the King James Bible were primarily influenced by the printing and orthographic -- spelling -- conventions of Early Modern English, and not really by a particular set of theological criteria for capitalization. As it turns out, during the early seventeenth century, English spelling and capitalization had not yet been fully standardized. A result of this was that the translators and printers of that period simply followed the prevailing practices of their time, even though said practices were sometimes inconsistent.

My online research reveals that there were five key factors which largely determined the capitalization practices which were implemented in the KJV Bible. These are the following:

\* General Capitalization of Nouns:

To my personal surprise, I discovered that in Early Modern English, it was common practice to capitalize all -- or many -- nouns, similar to modern German. This in fact accounts for the frequent capitalization of common words such as "Arke" or "Covenant", which obviously wouldn't be capitalized according to the standards of our modern times. In fact, even in my own BBB articles, I have a personal preference for capitalizing certain words sometimes, such as Salvation and Eternal Life. But I am not always consistent. I do this because I view such words as being particularly important to our Christian faith, and thus meriting respect.

\* Emphasis:

Capitalization was likewise sometimes used for the sake of emphasis, with the actual author or printer deciding which words should be highlighted, and which words should remain in lowercase letters only.

\* Lack of Standardization:

Due to the absence of a universal, codified English spelling standard during that time period, different printing houses and scholars employed different spelling conventions which

varied slightly from each other. However, that all changed when Samuel Johnson published his 2-volume "A Dictionary of the English Language" in London in 1755. Furthermore, later revisions -- particularly the aforementioned 1769 edition of the King James Bible -- eventually helped standardize English orthography, or spelling. In fact, these developments led to the capitalization rules we continue to use today where only proper nouns are normally capitalized.

#### \* Reverential Capitalization:

While the original 1611 edition of the KJV Bible capitalized nouns based on the general practices of that period time, the specific practice of what has now become known as "reverential capitalization" -- that is to say, capitalizing pronouns such as "He" or "Him" when referring to God -- did not exist in the 1611 KJV Bible itself. This was in fact a later development and spelling convention which was introduced in subsequent editions of the KJV Bible and other translations.

#### \* Differentiation of Divine Names:

As many Christians will know, one specific and intentional use of capitalization is found in the KJV Old Testament where the Hebrew Tetragrammaton -- that is to say, YHWH, which is God's personal name according to the Holy Scriptures -- was rendered in English as "LORD" in all uppercase letters. This was done to distinguish it from other Hebrew words for God, such as the word "Elohim", which is translated as "God" -- in the singular form -- even though technically-speaking, it is the plural form of "El".

Please go to part two for the conclusion of this article.

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Ancient Languages and KJV Bible Translation - Part 2

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Facts Behind Word Capitalization In The KJV, The History Of And The Factors Behind Introduction Of Numbers Chapters And Verses In The KJV, Latin Vulgate Bible, Geneva Bible And The Reluctance To Accept The KJV, Persecution Of Protestants By Henry VIII Blood Mary Et Al, King James I's Persecution Of The Puritans, Some Separatist Puritans Emigrated To America On The Mayflower In 1620, A Universal Standard, Unnecessary Chapter Breaks In Some Bible Books, Minimal Or No Spacing In Earliest Hebrew And Greek Texts, The Gradual Introduction Of Punctuation Marks, Early Hebrew Lacked Punctuation And Vowel Markings And Consisted Mainly Of Consonants, Oral Tradition, Additional Improvements By Masorete Scholars And The Masorah, Punctuation And Modern Bibles, Conclusion, Suggested Reading

Continuing our discussion from part one, and to reiterate the original point I made concerning the capitalization of words, insofar as capitalizing common nouns was concerned, the 1611 KJV Bible translators were not influenced by any specific theological criteria, personal biases, political views, or doctrinal leanings. They were simply adhering to the rather fluid and inconsistent linguistic and printing norms which were in existence during that time period in which they both lived and worked. However, please note that I am only referring to word capitalization here and NOT to actual word translation itself. I have considerably more to say regarding this issue in other articles I have written, which you will find listed at the end of this same article.

This also applies to the dividing up of the original Hebrew and Koine Greek texts into both chapters and verses as we all know the Bible today. That is to say, with numbered chapters, and with individual numbered verses as well. These divisions were a more recent development, and were clearly NOT a part of the original autographs and the manuscripts thereafter, in which each book was written in one solid block of text. These textual divisions were again done at the pure discretion of the translators for the sake of ease of reading, and other reasons.

For example, Bible chapter divisions are generally attributed to Stephen Langto, who was an Archbishop of Canterbury during the mid 12th to early 13th centuries. Langto was likewise a lecturer at the University of Paris. He developed his system

of chapter divisions around the year 1205 AD for the purpose of assisting students and scholars in both navigating and referencing specific passages within the Latin Vulgate Bible. The Latin Vulgate was the standard Bible translation during that particular time period due to the obvious and powerful influence of the Roman Catholic Church. Sadly, this practice kept God's Word out of the direct hands of the common people for literally centuries, as I explain in other BBB articles.

Concerning the Hebrew Bible -- which is the same thing as our Old Testament -- its division into single verses goes back to a much earlier time. According to my personal research, these divisions were based on a Jewish tradition to assist with oral reading and interpretation of the Torah. However, the modern verse numbering system of the Old Testament was standardized by a Jewish rabbi by the name of Nathan in the year 1448 AD.

Lastly, my research has revealed that the New Testament was not actually given a widely accepted verse numbering system until 1551 AD. This was accomplished by a Parisian printer and scholar by the name of Robert Estienne -- who was also known as Robert Stephanus -- who first introduced his New Testament verse numbering system in his 1551 edition of the Greek New Testament.

Concerning the first complete English Bible which actually incorporated both the modern chapter and verse divisions as we know them today, this would be the well-known and very beloved Geneva Bible, which was published in English in the year 1560 AD. In fact, as I mention in a few other of my BBB articles, when the 1611 Authorized King James Version of the Bible was first published some fifty years later, it was NOT quickly adopted by the common people, who instead preferred to remain with the Geneva Bible. This was due in part to the fact that the Geneva Bible contained anti-Catholic marginal notes with which the people identified.

Strong animosity towards Roman Catholicism was due largely to the persecutions which were carried out by Catholic monarchs such as Henry VIII, Mary I -- a.k.a. "Blood Mary" -- and to a lesser degree by Edward VI and Elizabeth I. Even King James I -- who sponsored the Authorized King James Bible, and who was the son of Mary I -- persecuted the Protestants, even though he was raised as a Protestant and a Calvinist. In particular, he prosecuted those he considered nonconformists or "radical" Puritans, who refused to adhere to the rules of the Church of England. King James I believed strongly in the "divine right

of kings" and the hierarchical structure of the Church of England, with the monarch as its head. As a result, he viewed any challenge to his authority in religious matters as also being a threat to his overall rule as king.

What is particularly interesting regarding these historical events is that the most extreme Puritans -- who were known as the Separatists -- completely broke away from the Church of England rather than conform to James I's mandates. They faced significant persecution, leading some -- such as the Pilgrims who sailed on the Mayflower in 1620 -- to emigrate to North America five years before James I's death in 1625. So while James I has been lauded by many Christians due to the Bible which was named in his honor, he was far from being a Saint.

At any rate, the chapter and verse divisions we discussed earlier have since become the universal standard for Bibles across many languages and versions. In some cases, I believe that the scholars who were involved in these textual changes and divisions could have done a little bit better job. I say this because there are a few places in the Scriptures where such divisions do seem to break the flow of the Spirit, and thus the flow of thought and what is actually being said. I believe that sometimes, readers lose the connection between one chapter and the next because of these division points.

For example, if a reader suddenly begins reading at the very beginning of the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, without having first read the eleventh chapter, he or she might not realize that when the author writes "so great a cloud of witnesses", he is referring back to all the individuals he just mentioned in chapter eleven. In a similar fashion, if the reader begins reading at the very beginning of Romans 8, he or she may not realize the connection to what the Apostle Paul had written previously in chapter 7 regarding his own personal struggles with sin and the flesh. You may or may not agree with me.

Another challenge with Bible translations concerns the proper placement of punctuation marks. Just as we discussed earlier regarding the capitalization of words in the Hebrew and Koine Greek manuscripts, we encounter a similar issue when it comes to punctuation. The fact of the matter is that neither the original Hebrew Old Testament or the Koine Greek New Testament manuscripts utilized any form of punctuation marks, such as the comma, for example. Both were written in a continuous flow of letters. In the Old Testament, this meant that there was minimal spacing -- or simple dots -- in the

early Hebrew manuscripts. Regarding the Greek New Testament, as I mentioned earlier, aside from the fact that Koine Greek was written in all uppercase letters -- known as uncials -- it was also written without spaces between words, which was known as "scriptio continua".

As a result of this lack of visual cues, readers simply had to rely on their familiarity with the language, context, and the rhetorical flow in order to properly interpret the pauses and sentence divisions during oral reading. However, as the centuries passed, various scribes gradually began introducing aids to assist New Testament readers. There were three major developments in this area, as noted below:

1. Rudimentary dots were the earliest form of punctuation, and indicated short, moderate, or full pauses. However, the use of such dots was sporadic and unsystematic in the early Greek manuscripts.

2. Breath marks and accents were even later additions which became more common in Greek manuscripts after 800 AD. These marks and accents aided in proper pronunciation.

3. Modern-style punctuation -- including the comma, colon, and full stop -- became standard with the transition to minuscule -- or lowercase -- script in the ninth and tenth centuries AD. The term "full stop" is the equivalent of a period mark at the end of a sentence.

For modern readers, reading ancient Hebrew as we find in the Old Testament -- or Hebrew Bible -- would've been even more challenging. Not only did the early Hebrew manuscripts lack any kind of formal punctuation and vowel markings, but to make reading it even more difficult, Hebrew text primarily consisted of consonants. Furthermore, proper pronunciation and phrasing were simply passed down by means of strong oral tradition. As I briefly mentioned a moment ago, spaces and paragraph divisions were sometimes indicated by either a dot between words, or by a break in the line. However, a uniform system did not yet exist.

In addition to the above, cantillation marks -- which were musical notations for chanting the text in the synagogue -- and vowel points were later systematically added to the text by the Masoretes from the 6th to the 10th century AD. These marks helped clarify pronunciation, and did include symbols that served a function similar to punctuation by indicating

pauses or connections between words within a verse.

Regarding the Masoretes, they were a group of Jewish scholars who contributed to the establishment of a recognized text of the Hebrew Bible, and also to the compilation of the Masorah. The Masorah was/is a collection of information and commentary on the text of the traditional Hebrew Bible. That is to say, the Tanakh or Miqra. On a side note, please realize that the Masorah and the Babylonian Talmud are NOT the same thing. The purpose of the Masorah is to ensure that the biblical text is accurately transmitted, while the Talmud interprets that text and applies it to Jewish life and law.

Moving up to our current times, as we all know, modern Bibles include various punctuation marks to make the text readable and understandable for a modern audience. And so, translators insert commas, periods, and other punctuation marks, based on the grammatical structure of the original language, and the interpretive tradition passed down through centuries. While these additions are interpretive aids, and NOT a part of the original, inspired text -- meaning the autographs -- they do help to communicate the intended meaning of the text to a contemporary audience.

In conclusion, my dear friends, I hope you can see that the translation of the ancient Hebrew and Greek texts into modern English was NOT such an easy task, and that how we understand the Holy Scriptures today is in fact directly influenced by the level of accuracy of the particular Bible translation we are using. That being the case, I urge all of you to choose wisely when it comes to determining which version holds the most truth.

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?

Controversy: Matthew 28:19 and the Trinitarian Phrase

Facebook False Prophets and Misguided Teachers

Have You Read the New Scriptures Yet?

History of the Authorized King James Bible

Humility in Our Understanding of God's Word

In Defense of the KJV Bible

Is the KJV Bible the Inerrant Word of God?

It Is Time to Wake Up!

King James Bible: Structure and Breakdown

My Evolving Theology

Please Stop Misinterpreting the Scriptures

Queen James Bible: Blasphemous Abomination Exposed!

Should Christians Engage in Doctrinal Debates?

The Parable of the Sower: Salvation and Service

Understanding the Bible in Context

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