

Why do I use the New King James Version of the Bible?
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Introduction

The New King James Version was commissioned in 1975 by Thomas Nelson Publishers, 130 respected Bible scholars, church leaders and lay Christians worked for seven years to create a completely new, modern translation of the Scriptures, yet one that would retain the purity and stylistic beauty of the original King James. With unyielding faithfulness to the original Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic texts, the translators applied the most recent research in archaeology, linguistics and technical studies. The result is a Bible that is both beautifully worded and trustworthy, ideal for study, teaching, personal reading and congregational use. This Bible also gives the accuracy and beauty of the King James version in contemporary, readable language.

The stated goal of producing the New King James Version was to produce a revision of the King James Bible prepared with profound reverence for the Word of God and with a deep appreciation of the wise traditions established by the translators of the 1611 King James Bible. The translators worked with the hope that their revision clarified the meaning of the Scriptures and brought the treasures of God's Word to the reader.

Translation method: Complete Equivalence (Strives to provide the most complete representation of the original while considering the history of usage and etymology of words in their contexts).

First published: 1982

Reading level: Grade 7-8

History of the Version

The New King James Version was conceived by Arthur Farstad, a conservative Baptist and a former editor at Thomas Nelson Publishers. The project was inaugurated in 1975 with two meetings (Nashville and Chicago) of 68 interested persons, most of them prominent Baptists but also with some conservative Presbyterians. The men who were invited to these meetings prepared the guidelines for the NKJV. In 1984 the NKJV was slightly revised by a committee of reviewers chaired by Farstad.

For nearly four hundred years, and throughout several revisions of its English form, the King James Bible has been deeply revered among the English-speaking peoples of the world. The precision of translation for which it is historically renowned, and its majesty of style, have enabled that monumental version of the Word of God to become the mainspring of the religion, language, and legal foundations of our civilization.

Although the Elizabethan period and our own era share in zeal for technical advance, the former period was more aggressively devoted to classical learning. Along with this awakened concern for the classics came a flourishing companion in interest in the Scriptures, an interest that was enlivened by the conviction that the manuscripts were

provisionally handed down and were a trustworthy record of the inspired Word of God. The King James translators were committed to producing an English Bible that would be a precise translation, and by no means a paraphrase or a broadly approximate rendering. On the one hand, the scholars were almost as familiar with the original languages of the Bible as with their native English. On the other hand, their reverence for the divine Author and His Word assured a translation of the Scriptures in which only a principle of utmost accuracy could be accepted.

Complete Equivalence in Translation

Where new translation has been necessary in the New King James Version, the most complete representation of the original has been rendered by considering the history of usage and etymology of words in their contexts. This principle of complete equivalence seeks to preserve all of the information in the text, while presenting it in good literary form. Dynamic equivalence, a recent procedure in Bible translation, commonly results in paraphrasing where a more literal rendering is needed to reflect a specific and vital sense. Complete equivalence translates fully, in order to provide an English text that is both accurate and readable.

In keeping with the principle of complete equivalence, it is the policy to translate interjections which are commonly omitted in modern language renderings of the Bible. As an example, the interjection *behold*, in the older King James editions, continues to have a place in English usage, especially in dramatically calling attention to a spectacular scene, or an event of profound importance such as the Immanuel prophecy of Isaiah 7:14. Consequently, *behold* is retained for these occasions in the present edition. However, the Hebrew and Greek originals for this word can be translated variously, depending on the circumstances in the passage. Therefore, in addition to *behold*, words such as *indeed*, *look*, *see*, and *surely* are also rendered to convey the appropriate sense suggested by the context in each case.

In faithfulness to God and to our readers, it was deemed appropriate that all participating scholars sign a statement affirming their belief in the verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture, and in the inerrancy of the original autographs.

To this end, biblical scholars were selected to work on the New King James Bible project and they came from all over the world; Canada, England, Scotland, New Zealand, Australia, the Netherlands, Taiwan, and the United States. They were hopeful that by selecting such a diverse team, the New King James Version would reflect international accepted English usage. All of the translators worked privately using the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia for the Old Testament or the Scrivener Greek Text for the New Testament and all used the 1611 King James Version as revised in 1769. Each scholar then submitted their work to the executive editor of either the Old or New Testament. A concordance and word studies of the English, Greek and Hebrew were prepared by the executive editors and their associates.

Using the original texts and the King James Bible in view of the guidelines, the executive editors for each Testament reviewed each scholar's work. Each book was then submitted to the English editor to be checked for grammatical accuracy, literary beauty and effective communication or readability. Over a period of four years, a final exhaustive review was carried out by a separate executive review committee for each Testament. The review process was completed in July, 1981, at St. Andres University in northeast Scotland not far from King James' residence, Sterling Castle.

Devotional Quality

The King James scholars readily appreciated the intrinsic beauty of divine revelation. They accordingly disciplined their talents to render well-chosen English words of their time, as well as a graceful, often musical arrangement of language, which has stirred the hearts of Bible readers through the years. The translators, the committees, and the editors of the present edition, while sensitive to the late-twentieth-century English idiom, and while adhering faithfully to the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts, have sought to maintain those lyrical and devotional qualities that are so highly regarded in the Authorized Version. This devotional quality is especially apparent in the poetic and prophetic books, although even the relatively plain style of the Gospels and Epistles cannot strictly be likened, as sometimes suggested, to modern newspaper style. The Koine Greek of the New Testament is influenced by the Hebrew background of the writers, for whom even the gospel narratives were not merely flat utterance, but often sung in various degrees of rhythm.

To come up with an acceptable revision that would meet the needs of public worship, Christian education and personal reading and study, they selected leading clergymen and Christian laymen who were invited to meetings in Chicago, Illinois, and Nashville, Tennessee in 1975 and in London, England in 1976. Almost 100 church leaders from a broad spectrum of churches gave strong endorsement to a New King James Version.

The Style

Students of the Bible applaud the timeless devotional character of our historic Bible. Yet it is also universally understood that our language, like all living languages, has undergone profound change since 1611. Subsequent revisions of the King James Bible have sought to keep abreast of changes in English speech. The present work is a further step toward this objective. Where obsolescence and other reading difficulties exist, present-day vocabulary, punctuation, and grammar have been carefully integrated. Words representing ancient objects, such as *chariot* and *phylactery*, have no modern substitutes and are therefore retained.

A special feature of the New King James Version is its conformity to the thought flow of the 1611 Bible. The reader discovers that the sequence and selection of words, phrases, and clauses of the new edition, while much clearer, are so close to the traditional that there is remarkable ease in listening to the reading of either edition while following with the other.