

Why We Hold to the KJV

Part 11 – What about the NKJV?

Text: Song 2:15, Gal. 5:9

Introduction:

1. The NKJV is not the worst modern version but it is probably the most dangerous to a church like ours. We are more likely to fall for a Bible that seems closer to our position than something way out there like the Message.
2. A brief history of the NKJV
 - a. The impetus for the NKJV came in 1975 from Arthur Farstad, a conservative Baptist editor working for Thomas Nelson & Sons publishers. Farstad held two meetings with 68 prominent preachers and educators (mostly Baptist), resulting in the establishing of the rules for the revision. The stated desire was to produce a minor revision of the Authorized, King James Version, updating its few archaic words and modernizing its English.
 - b. The then-owner of Thomas Nelson & Sons, Sam Moore, was an astute businessman who saw that much gain could be made out of the continuing preference for the Authorized, King James Version in conservative and fundamentalist circles — a market the other versions could not effectively tap. This company produced and published the NKJV.
 - c. The NKJV was itself revised in 1984.
3. In this message we will consider 7 plain reasons to reject the NKJV.

I. THE NKJV TRANSLATORS WERE NOT TRULY COMMITTED TO THE TEXTUS RECEPTUS

- A. In a statement of purpose for the New King James Version, the Thomas Nelson Publishing Company set forth this aim, among others: “to produce an updated English Version that follows the sentence structure of the 1611 Authorized Version as closely as possible. As much of the original King James Version as possible will be preserved. The intention is to clarify the 1611 translation by the use of current words, grammar, idioms, and sentence structure so that this edition of the King James Version will speak to the individual reader in a clear and accurate manner. The intention is not to take from or alter the basic communication of the 1611 edition but to transfer the Elizabethan word forms into twentieth century English.” This statement would prove to be deceitful and misleading!

- B. The Trinitarian Bible Society Article, “An Examination of the NKJV” notes that “In the New Testament, the NKJV presents a textual apparatus, alongside its translation, with readings from the Nestle-Aland critical Greek text, the text from which the New International Version, the New American Standard Bible, the Revised Standard Version and the vast majority of modern versions are translated. The textual apparatus also includes variant readings from the so called Byzantine majority text which is an edition of the Greek text edited by Zane Hodges and Arthur Farstad (Dr Farstad was also the editor of the New King James Version). **The presentation of these variant readings would make it appear that the Textus Receptus is not reliable, and that therefore, by implication, the Authorised Version, which used the Textus Receptus in Greek for its New Testament translation, is itself suspect.**”
- C. While the NKJV follows the same basic texts of the AV1611, one of its features is the numerous text-critical marginal notes — highlighting variations from the NU (N = Nestle-Aland; U = United Bible Societies) and M (Hodges-Farstad Majority Text) texts. These side notes place question marks over 139 passages in the New Testament.
- D. Illustration: Dr. James Price’s email to David Cloud in 1996:

“I am not a TR advocate. I happen to believe that God has preserved the autographic text in the whole body of evidence that He has preserved, not merely through the textual decisions of a committee of fallible men based on a handful of late manuscripts. The modern critical texts like NA26/27 [Nestles] and UBS [United Bible Societies] provide a list of the variations that have entered the manuscript traditions, and they provide the evidence that supports the different variants. In the apparatus they have left nothing out, the evidence is there. The apparatus indicates where possible additions, omissions, and alterations have occurred. ... I am not at war with the conservative modern versions [such as the New International Version and the New American Standard Version]” (James Price, e-mail to David Cloud, April 30, 1996). Dr. James Price was the executive editor of the Old Testament portion of the NKJV. In this email to David Cloud he admits that he is not committed to the Received Text, that he supports the modern versions, that he supports the modern critical Greek text, and that he himself is a textual critic. It is obvious that Dr. Price holds to the standard eclectic text position that was popularized by Westcott and Hort in the late 1800s and that he is committed to modern textual criticism. Dr. Price has a flippant attitude to the revival producing Received Text in favor of one that has questionable authority (i.e., Sinaiticus and Vaticanus) that were rejected by Bible believing churches for at least 1,500 years. He promotes the myth that the Received Text is supported by a few late manuscripts. He further supports the NIV which is not only based on the wrong Greek text but also incorporates the dynamic equivalency method (thought for thought) translation method.

- E. David Cloud wisely observes, “With men like this in charge, it is not possible that the New King James Bible could be merely a simply revision of the KJV. I do not know of one man involved with the translation of the NKJV who had a

conviction about the authority of the Old and New Testament Texts underlying the KJV.”

- F. Dr Arthur Farstad (Editor) stated in his preface to the New King James: "Today, scholars agree that the science of New Testament textual criticism is in a state of flux. Very few scholars still favour the Textus Receptus as such, and then often for its historical prestige as the text of Luther, Calvin, Tyndale, and the King James Version. For about a century most have followed a Critical Text (so called because it is edited according to specific principles of textual criticism) which depends heavily upon the Alexandrian type of text. More recently many have abandoned this Critical Text (which is quite similar to the one edited by Westcott and Hort) for one that is more eclectic. Finally, a small but growing number of scholars prefer the majority text, which is close to the traditional text except in the Revelation." Dr. Arthur Farstad, (Chairman of the NKJV Executive Review Committee)

II. THE NKJV MAKES THOUSANDS OF UNECESSARY CHANGES

- A. Rather than making a few minor modifications, there are around **80,000 to 100,000** changes from the AV1611. Many of these changed words also change meanings. This was probably done for copyright purposes.
- B. The then-owner of Thomas Nelson & Sons, Sam Moore, was an astute businessman who saw that much gain could be made out of the continuing preference for the Authorized, King James Version in conservative and fundamentalist circles — a market the other versions could not effectively tap. This company produced and published the NKJV.
- C. Contrary to what the original purpose was stated to be, the NKJV is a new translation, not a mere language update.

III. THE NKJV MAKES DANGEROUS OMISSIONS & CHANGES

- A. Examples from the Old Testament (refer PowerPoint slides)
- B. Examples from the New Testament (refer PowerPoint slides)
- C. The NKJV goes soft of the sin of Sodomy. Instead of using the word 'sodomite' it translates it as "perverted one" which is very general and could refer to any number of sins.

IV. THE NKJV REPLACES THE WORD 'HELL' WITH THE WORD 'HADES'

- A. When we consider that the practice of replacing the word hell in English versions with the word *hades* began with the translation of the

Revised Version of 1881, we can only be alarmed. The heterodoxy of several members of that translation committee, notably William Robertson Smith, a Scottish higher critic, and George Vance Smith, a Unitarian, is all too well known. The Unitarians since Vance Smith's time have joined with the Universalists, who obviously deny the eternal punishment of the wicked in hell. (Trinitarian Bible Society Article)

- B. The NKJV leaves "Hades" (the underworld) **untranslated**. This **removes `hell'** so as not to offend sinners. The NKJV changes **'hell'** (KJV) to **sheol** in the Old Testament, and 'hell' to **Hades** in the New Testament. **This is misleading, because everyone went to Hades at death, some to the paradise comfort side, and others to the hell torment side. The NKJV hides the warning of hell torment.** This change by the NKJV is wrong, because the context is judgment, suffering or destruction, which is the destiny of the unsaved. The reader thus doesn't hear the warning against hell's suffering awaiting him for rejecting Christ. People associate hell with fire and torment. **They associate "Hades" with nothing!** The NKJV drops `hell' and uses `hades' so as not to offend. The NKJV lulls people into thinking that hell does not exist and if it does exist, then it has no pain and is nothing to be concerned about. (K. Piper, *Serious Omissions in the NIV Bible*, p. 46)
- C. In 11 verses, the NKJV replaces the word "hell" with the word "hades," as follows:

Mt. 11:23 -- Hades
Mt. 16:18 -- Hades
Lk. 10:15 -- Hades
Lk. 16:23 -- Hades
Acts 2:27 -- Hades
Acts 2:31 -- Hades
1 Co. 15:55 -- Hades
Re. 1:18 -- Hades
Re. 6:8 -- Hades
Re. 20:13 -- Hades
Re. 20:14 -- Hades

V. THE NKJV REMOVES THE IMPORTANT DISCITIONG BETWEEN THE SINGULAR AND PLURAL OF THE SECOND PERSON PRONOUN (THEE, THOU, THY, THINE VS. YE, YOU, YOUR)

- A. The use of 'thou' and 'thee' and 'ye' was already dying out in the days of the AV1611 translators, as is evident in Shakespeare's plays. However, the KJV translators wisely chose to retain these forms for greater clarity and closeness to the Greek and Hebrew. With a little effort to learn these words the reader of the KJV is rewarded with a greater level of detail and clarity than the reader of the modern versions.
- B. We can see the importance of this with the following examples:
1. JOHN 3:7
 - KJV "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."
 - NKJV "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"
 2. Isaiah 7:14
 - KJV "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."
 - NKJV "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."
 - On the surface there appears to be no difference. However, because the NKJV uses "you" to mean singular or plural, you have no way of knowing if the prophet is speaking to King Ahaz alone or to all Israel. However, in the KJV if the prophet was speaking to Ahaz alone the word 'thee' would be used, and not 'you'. Hence it is clear in the AV that the prophet is speaking to all Israel.

VI. THE NKJV CRITICAL FOOTNOTES SOW THE SAME DOUBT AND CONFUSION AS OTHER MODERN VERSIONS

A. 44 ENTIRE VERSES ARE QUESTIONED IN THE MARGIN OF THE NKJV ON THE BASIS OF THE UNRELIABLE UNITED BIBLE SOCIETIES TEXT

Matthew 17:21; 18:11; 21:4; 23:14; 24:6
 Mark 7:16; 9:44; 9:46; 11:26; 15:28; 16:9-20
 Luke 17:36; 22:43; 22:44; 23:17
 John 5:4; 7:53-8:11 Acts 8:37; 15:34; 24:7; 28:29
 Romans 16:24
 1 John 5:7

B. PORTIONS OF 95 OTHER VERSES ARE QUESTIONED IN THE MARGIN OF THE NKJV ON THE BASIS OF THE UNITED BIBLE SOCIETIES TEXT (Refer slides for details)

VII. THE NKJV IS A DANGEROUS BRIDGE TO THE WORLD OF MODERN, CORRUPT BIBLE VERSIONS

- A. It is like soft CCM (i.e., the Gettys music) and how it builds bridges from sacred music to the whole compromised world of Christian rock and roll.
- B. THE NKJV IS A SLIPPERY SLOPE. ONCE YOU ALLOW ONE CORRUPTED BIBLE VERSION, WHAT NEXT?**
- C. David Cloud writes, “Kirk DiVietro, pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Franklin, Massachusetts, attended one of the Thomas Nelson planning meetings that prepared the way for the publication of the New King James. He testified to me that **the Thomas Nelson representative plainly stated that their goal with the NKJV was to create a bridge to the modern versions, to break down the resistance of those who still revere the KJV.** Following is Bro. DiVietro’s testimony as he gave it to me by e-mail on January 9, 2005.”

“Over 20 years ago I attended a pre-publication meeting of the NKJV held by the Thomas Nelson People and hosted by the Hackman’s Bible Bookstore in Allentown, PA. I am personal friends with the owners who took great delight in seating me next to the brother of the main translator of the NIV. The meeting was attended by over 300 college professors and pastors. At the meeting we were treated to a slide presentation of the history of the English bible and in particular the King James Bible and its several revisions. During the presentation of the NKJV the Thomas Nelson representative made a statement which to the best of my memory was, ‘We are all educated people here. We would never say this to our people, but we all know that the King James Version is a poor translation based on poor texts. But every attempt to give your people a better Bible has failed. They just won’t accept them. So we have gone back and done a revision of the King James Version, a fifth revision. **Hopefully it will serve as a transitional bridge to eventually get your people to accept a more accurate Bible.**’ Because of the years, and because I did not write it down, I cannot give you the speaker’s name and I cannot promise you that this is word for word correct, but the meeting so seared my spirit that I have never picked up and opened a NKJV. I can tell you that this is absolutely the substance and nearly the exact words of what was said.”

D. The NKJV should really be named **“THE NOT KING JAMES VERSION”!**

CONCLUSION: Watch out for the little foxes and the little leaven!