

How to Study the Bible

Unit 3: Lexical / Grammatical Analysis – Lesson 1: From Translation to Interpretation

Translational Considerations

- Important Terms
 1. **Translation** – The process of attempting to ascertain the original wording of a text and express it in another language.
 2. **Manuscript** – Handwritten **copies** of original text.
 - New Testament Manuscripts –
 - Over 5,600 complete Greek (Some dating back to 2nd century)
 - Approximately 20,000 Fragments
 - Old Testament Manuscripts –
 - Prior to 1947, Masoretic text 900 AD
 - 1948 – Dead Sea Scrolls –
 - Over 10,000 manuscripts, some dating back to 250 BC
 - Currently:
 - Collections of the most reliable manuscripts.

Science of Translation

- Textual Criticism
 1. **Challenges of Translating**
 - **Imagine you are a translator dealing with following challenges.**
 - Handwritten, Primitive instruments, Aged materials, All Capital letters, Differing word orders, No spacing, No punctuation, No paragraphing, No headings, No vowels (Hebrew Texts)
 - **Examples:**
 - Genesis 1:1 – NTHBGNNNGDCRTDTHHVNSNDTHRTH
 - John 1:1 – INTHEBEGINNINGWASTHEWORDANDTHEWORDWASWITHGODANDTHEWORDWASGODHEWASWITHGODINTHEBEGINNING
 2. **Decisions of the Translator**
 - Of the thousands of manuscripts, **none** of them are identical.
 - Moving from Original Language to Receptor Language.
 - Criteria
 - External Evidence –
 - Age - the older the better
 - Condition
 - Reputation of Copyist
 - Penmanship
 - Tradition
 - Internal Evidence –
 - Copyist's Tendencies/Persuasions
 - Author's usual style and vocabulary.
 - What happens if a passage is inconclusive and can't be reconciled?
 - Some use best guess.
 - Usually noted with footnotes.
 - Careful, rigorous care taken by translators for thousands of years to ensure we are using best manuscripts.

Types of Translations

- **RANGE of** Bridging gap between Original Language and Receptor Language

1. Formal Equivalence

- Translation attempts to keep as close to the form of the original Hebrew or Greek, both words and grammar, as can be conveniently put into understandable English.

- **Pro** – Preserves original language
- **Con** – At expense of author's idea/meaning (**makes unclear what would have been clear to original audience**).

1. Dynamic / Functional Equivalence

- Translation attempts to keep the meaning of the Hebrew or Greek but to put certain words and idioms into contemporary terms.

- **Pro** – Easier to understand meaning of text.
- **Con** – Certain translations miss the historic understanding.

2. Free / Paraphrase

- Translation has little regard for original language and focuses more heavily being more relevant to modern thinking.

- **Pro** – Ideas and concepts very fresh and vivid.
- **Cons** – Has such little regard for original language, meaning can't always be trusted.. (not even considered translations, but paraphrases/commentaries)

<u>Formal Equivalence</u>		<u>Functional Equivalence</u>				<u>Free/Paraphrase</u>		
KJV	NASB	RSV	NIV	NAB	GNB	JB	NEB	LB
NKJV	NASU	NRSV	TNIV	NJB	REB	NLT		The Message
		ESV						

Choosing a Translation

- Which translations should be used?
 - Meticulous Word Study / Outline Approach
 - Formal Equivalence – **NASB, KJV**
 - Everyday reading, memorization, study?
 - Functional Equivalence – **NIV, NRSV, ESV**
 - Best case scenario
 - Use a few different translations at once.
 - Parallel Translations
 - Commentaries