

The New King James Version (NKJV)

We have received a surprising number of requests for an analysis of the quality and accuracy of the New King James Version of the Bible.

It is true that there are a few (a very few) anachronisms (words which have changed in meaning over the centuries) in the King James Version; and it would be well if an edition could be printed which solved this problem. But, unfortunately, as explained in the quotation on the bottom of this page, the NKJV goes far beyond that—and introduces a number of Wescott and Hort errors, plus many unnecessary changes in wording and concepts. We are very sorry about this.

Here are a few problem passages in the NKJV. This list is by no means exhaustive; it should not be difficult to find more. As you will see in the examples given in this article, the NKJV revisers were not afraid to play around with the text,—to the point of even changing the meaning of some verses. Unfortunately, that should not have been done!

The New King James Version was first published in 1982; and some new NKJV editions have been released since then. Each one contains a variety of additional changes, which have the cumulative effect of slowly moving the NKJV still further from the KJV.

Some of these changes indicate that Thomas Nelson, the NKJV publisher, is trying to improve the sales of the NKJV by gradually making it sound more like the better-selling NIV, published by its rival, Zondervan.

With the passing of the years, Thomas Nelson continues to make additional alterations in the NKJV, in order to make it read more like the NIV. But as words change, concepts change.

Yet some of the later NKJV changes do not even agree with the NIV! One is the “longsuffering of God” in the original 1982 NKJV of 1 Peter 3:20, which is like the KJV. A later NKJV edition changed this to “the Divine longsuffering,” although that is not the meaning of the *Textus Receptus* Greek text (on which the KJV was based). Even in the NIV “God” is used in that verse (“God waited patiently”).

How tragic that this could not have been a properly prepared, updated King James Version! That is what we wanted.

Here are a few examples of changes which should not have been made:

Dead people are alive!

“Dead things are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof.”—*Job 26:5, KJV*.

“The dead tremble. Those under the waters and those inhabiting them.”—*Job 26:5, NKJV*.

This may be a passage which modernists would appreciate; but it is neither faithful to the KJV nor to the Greek text on which the KJV is based.

It would appear that the objective of this NKJV translation is to undercut the truth that the dead are really dead. That conclusion is strengthened by how the NKJV translates the following verse:

Here is a quotation from my large, in-depth analysis of the history of the Bible, the King James Version, and the origin and content of the modern versions:

“This version [the NKJV] demands special attention—since it is not what it purports to be.

“There was a need for a King James Version which modernized a few words, and nothing else. This Bible was supposed to do that—but has turned out to be partially based on the Nestle Text!

“This makes the NKJV something of a fraud. **How can a Bible dare to call itself ‘King James,’ when it has Westcott and Hort errors in it?**

“The New Testament was published in 1979 and the Old in 1982. Advertising for it showed a page from an original 1611 KJV with the comment that, since our current KJV is ‘just a revision,’ you will just love this new revision!

“People trust the King James. It’s the Bible for all who love God’s Word. Since 1611, four

major editions of the KJV have been published. And now Thomas Nelson—the world’s leading Bible publisher—is pleased to present the fifth major edition of this magnificent translation, the New King James Version.’—*Ad for the New King James Version*.

“The problem is that Thomas Nelson believes the ‘original language’ is closer to the Nestle Text than it is to Erasmus’ Text.

“Every word of the New King James Version has been checked against the original in light of increasing knowledge about the Greek and Hebrew languages. Nothing has been changed except to make the original meaning clearer.”—*Ad in Moody Monthly, June 1982*.

“In 774 instances, two alternative Greek readings are given, one in the text and the other in footnotes. Even the “-eth” and “-est” (loveth, lovest) have been removed.”—*The King James Bible and the Modern Versions, p. 156.*”

The dead are still thinking!

“His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; **in that very day his thoughts perish.**”—*Psalm 146:4, KJV.*

“His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; in that very day **his plans perish.**”—*Psalm 146:4, NKJV.*

According to the theology of the NKJV translators, the dead, who are burning in hellfire, have no plans for getting out of there.

We should look to scholars for our religious guidance!

“The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.”—*Ecclesiastes 12:11, KJV.*

“The words of the wise are like goads, and **the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given from one shepherd.**”—*Ecclesiastes 12:11, NKJV.*

Although the world today looks to graduates from universities as the authorities needed to provide guidance, it is only men and women who humble their souls before God, and prayerfully study His Word, who alone are capable of leading others back to their Creator.

Satan has already been destroyed!

“Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; **therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth** in the sight of all them that behold thee.”—*Ezekiel 28:18, KJV.*

“You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trading: **Therefore I brought fire from your midst; it devoured you. And I turned you to ashes upon the earth** in the sight of all who saw you.”—*Ezekiel 28:18, NKJV.*

This is the teaching of Universalism and ultra-modernism. There is no devil to worry about, just as there is no law which needs to be obeyed.

Everyone will be saved!

“**And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come:** and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.”—*Haggai 2:7, KJV.*

“‘**And I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,**’ says the Lord of hosts.”—*Haggai 2:7, NKJV.*

This passage infers that everyone in the world will come to Christ and be saved. The translators may not have had that meaning in mind; but they strayed so far from the KJV, which they are supposed to be adhering to, that this is the concept which is conveyed.

Matthew 24 is only about the end of the age!

“And as He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, **and of the end of the world?**”—*Matthew 24:3, KJV.*

“Now as He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, **and of the end of the age?**”—*Matthew 24:3, NKJV.*

According to several passages in the NKJV, there will be no “end of the world” as we know it, only an end of an epic, or period of time. The NKJV translation of the above passages undercuts our warning message to the world that it needs to prepare for the final crisis, about to come upon us all. Similar “age” errors will be found in *Matthew 13:39-40, 49*—and even *Matthew 28:20*—in the NKJV.

Jesus was not the Creator of our world!

“He was in the world, **and the world was made by Him,** and the world knew Him not.”—*John 1:10, KJV.*

“He was in the world, **and the world was made through Him,** and the world did not know Him.”—*John 1:10, NKJV.*

According to the KJV, Christ made the world; according to the NKJV, Christ was not an active agent in the Creation.

Christ was God's servant, not His Son!

“The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, **hath glorified His Son Jesus;** whom ye delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go.”—*Acts 3:13, KJV.*

“The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, **glorified His Servant Jesus,** whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go.”—*Acts 3:13, NKJV.*

This passage, like the next one, flagrantly denies the Sonship of Christ!

Interesting oddities: The belief of the translators, that man is immortal, is indicated in certain passages dealing with death; for example, Job 14:10: “Man dies and is laid away” (NKJV) instead of “wasteth away” (KJV). / The prophecy of the destruction of Satan (Ezekiel 28:18-19) is changed to the past tense, so it will only apply to the king of Tyre. / Instead of being obedient “to death,” Christ was only obedi-

ent “to the point of death” (Philippians 2:8, NKJV). / Instead of being converted, people are only “turned” or “returned” (NKJV: Matthew 13:15, Mark 4:12, Luke 22:32, Acts 28:27). / The law is responsible for our sins; for it is the “sinful passions which were aroused by the law” (Romans 7:5, NKJV). / Upon His ascension, Jesus passed “through” heaven (Hebrews 4:14, NKJV) instead of “into” heaven.

“Unto you first God, **having raised up His Son Jesus**, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.”—*Acts 3:26, KJV*.

“To you first, God, **having raised up His Servant Jesus**, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.”—*Acts 3:26, NKJV*.

“Servant” would clearly be out of context in the above passage; yet that is what the NKJV translators placed in it, in violation of their mandate to adhere to the KJV.

The Divine nature is contrasted to metal and stone!

“Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that **the Godhead** is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device.”—*Acts 17:29, KJV*.

“Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that **the Divine Nature** is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising.”—*Acts 17:29, NKJV*.

The above passage is obviously speaking about idol worship, not the inner nature of what the Godhead is like! The *New American Standard Bible* is the only other translation which has “Divine nature” in this verse. Why would God’s nature be compared to gold, silver, or stone? The passage is speaking about idolatry, comparing the true God with false gods; it is not talking about God’s nature. The Greek word, *theios*, means “Godhead.”

Jesus was raised from the dead because we had already been justified!

“Who was delivered for our offences, **and was raised again for our justification**.”—*Romans 4:25, KJV*.

“Who was delivered up because of our offenses, **and was raised because of our justification**.”—*Romans 4:25, NKJV*.

Jesus’ resurrection was not dependent on our justification; but our justification was dependent on His resurrection! Jesus was raised to justify us individually, by His ministry in the heavenly Sanctuary. He was not raised because we were corporately justified and saved at the cross! That is a modernist error which has been slipped into the NKJV.

It is wrong to sell copies of God’s Word!

“For we are not as many, **which corrupt the Word of God**: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.”—*2 Corinthians 2:17, KJV*.

“For we are not, as so many, **peddling the Word of God**: but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.”—*2 Corinthians 2:17, NKJV*.

This is truly a strange translation! Both Strong and Vine clearly show that the Greek is “*corrupt*,” not

“*peddle*.”

The usual definition of “*peddle*” is to travel about, selling something, peddling goods from door-to-door. It is not wrong for colporteurs to sell Bibles from home to home. Why did the NKJV translators not remain with the KJV?

At some earlier time we have been sealed!

“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, **whereby ye are sealed** unto the day of redemption.”—*Ephesians 4:30, KJV*.

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, **by whom you were sealed** for the day of redemption.”—*Ephesians 4:30, NKJV*.

According to this, there is no future sealing. At some earlier time, we were sealed into our final redemption. Our salvation was fixed at some time in the past. In reality, as the KJV clearly states, it is now that we are to prepare for what is ahead; it is now that we are to put away our sins and so conduct our lives through the enabling grace of Christ, that each day we are more fully prepared for what is coming so soon upon us all.

While on earth, Christ was a slave and only appeared to be like men!

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and **took upon Him the form of a servant**, and was **made in the likeness of men**.”—*Philippians 2:5-7, KJV*.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, **taking the form of a bond servant**, and **coming in the likeness of men**.”—*Philippians 2:5-7, NKJV*.

Jesus Christ was not a bond slave to God during His earthly life! A bond slave has no free will of his own. If Christ was a bond slave, then a robot died for us—and that death is without saving benefit. *Doulos*, in the Greek, refers to all types of servants and helpers, not just bond slaves.

The man of sin is the person who initiates no ordinances and requires obedience to no laws!

“**For the mystery of iniquity doth already work**: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. **And then shall that Wicked be revealed**, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming.”—*2 Thessalonians 2:7-8, KJV*.

“**For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work**: only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. **And then the lawless one will be revealed**, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness

of His coming.”—2 Thessalonians 2:7-8, NKJV.

According to this NKJV translation, the antichrist will be someone who lives outside of all laws, a renegade. But, in truth, the man of sin is the vicar of Rome, who down through the centuries replaced God’s laws with a rigid collection of man-made edicts and enforced traditions. Catholics are bound to their church by many requirements and canon laws.

Christ did not take the human nature of Abraham’s offspring!

“For verily **He took not on Him the nature of angels; but he took on Him the seed of Abraham.**”—Hebrews 2:16, KJV.

“For indeed **He does not give aid to angels; but he does give aid to the seed of Abraham.**”—Hebrews 2:16, NKJV.

This is an astounding translation! Hebrews 2:16 is the outstanding Bible verse, clarifying that Christ took not the nature of unfallen Adam, but the nature of Abraham’s descendants. (On pp. 103-108 of our book, *Bringing It Back*, you will find a couple dozen other Bible passages which also teach that Christ took the nature of Adam’s descendants.) The NKJV translators are remarkably daring!

At His resurrection, Christ permanently entered the second apartment!

“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood **He entered in once into the holy place**, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”—Hebrews 9:12, KJV.

“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood **He entered the Most Holy Place once for all**, having obtained eternal redemption.”—Hebrews 9:12, NKJV.

This passage undercuts our teaching about the Sanctuary Message. For a full understanding of the Greek words for “sanctuary,” “holy place,” and “most holy place” in Hebrews, read pp. 251-263 in my book, *Biblical Defense*. You can learn an immense amount about our historic message in that book.

Christ makes you complete, but not perfect!

“**Make you perfect in every good work** to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”—Hebrews 13:21, KJV.

“**Make you complete in every good work** to do His will, working in you what is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”—Hebrews 13:21, NKJV.

“Perfection” is a word which modernists do not like; because such a condition is achieved only by

humble obedience to the law of God, through the enabling grace of Christ. Men want to cling to their cherished sins and forget about the law of God.

All our sins must be confessed to men!

“**Confess your faults one to another**, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”—James 5:16, KJV.

“**Confess your trespasses to one to another**, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”—James 5:16, NKJV.

This passage, as translated in the NKJV, instructs the reader that it is all right to go to confessional and confess his sins to a priest, who will forgive him.

It is all right to adorn your body with gold, gorgeous clothing, or other decorations!

“**Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning** of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel.”—1 Peter 3:3, KJV.

“**Do not let your adornment be merely outward**—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel.”—1 Peter 3:3, NKJV.

This mistranslation totally sets aside the KJV meaning of this passage! According to the NKJV revisers, it is all right to adorn your body—as much as you want—as long as you make sure you add a little “adornment” inside.

The wicked, who have died, are already being punished!

“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, **and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.**”—2 Peter 2:9, KJV.

“The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations **and to reserve the unjust under punishment** for the day of judgment.”—2 Peter 2:9, NKJV.

This Bible is subtly teaching that the wicked are already being punished—even before the final day of judgment!

Sin is not transgression of the law!

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”—1 John 3:4, KJV.

“Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.”—1 John 3:4, NKJV.

1 John 3:4 is an extremely important passage! This is the only passage in the Bible which defines sin! (See *Great Controversy*, 493.) Yet it is changed in the NKJV. Sin no longer is disobedience to God’s law, but “committing lawlessness,” whatever that is. —vf