

“Word of God”

Sermon – August 2, 2026 Stone Presbyterian Church

[All PowerPoint]



What is Your Basis?

- **Judaism has an authoritative Hebrew text**
- **Islam has an authoritative Arabic text**
- **Christianity has no single authoritative text**
- **For OT we use principally Masoretic Hebrew text from ~1000 CE (same as Jewish bible) and Septuagint Greek text and Dead Sea Scrolls**
- **For NT use ~5,800 Greek manuscripts (but also other sources) particularly two 4th century codices (books) that are the earliest complete version of the bible that we have (but they also have non-canonical books)**

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**Canon Comparison Table:
Number of Books by Tradition**

Tradition / Canon	OT	NT	Total	Notes
Jewish Tanakh	24	—	24	Same content as Protestant OT but counted differently (combined books).
Protestant	39	27	66	Follows Hebrew canon; excludes Deuterocanonical books.
Roman Catholic	46	27	73	Includes 7 Deuterocanonical books (Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, 1–2 Maccabees).
Eastern Orthodox (Greek/Russian)	49–51	27	76–78	Adds books such as 1 Esdras, 3 Maccabees, Psalm 151, Prayer of Manasseh; some traditions include 4 Maccabees.
Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo	54	27	81	Broadest canon; includes Enoch, Jubilees, and Meqabyan I–III.

Christians differ on books in the Old Testament

Does it matter what translation we use?		
KJV	MGVH	NLV
For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.	For in this way God <i>demonstrated</i> love for the world: God gave the one and only Son, so that everyone who is believing in him may not perish but may be experiencing eternal life.	For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. Whoever puts his trust in God's Son will not be lost but will have life that lasts forever.
Only begotten Son? The one and only Son? Inclusive language? Does “perish” = “be lost” When do believers experience everlasting / eternal life?		
JOHN 3.16		

<https://www.biblegateway.com/verse/en/John%203%3A16>

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Challenges of Translation and Interpretation

- **Need to understand socio-historical context**
 - What was going on at that time?
 - What was the culture?
- **~2/3 of quotes in the NT from the OT come from Greek Septuagint which differs in parts from the Hebrew version**
- **Factors**
 - **Euphony** – trying to emulate/echo how the gospel *sounded* to the original Greek-speaking audience
 - **Grammar and syntax** – keep oral features or make it more readable

Language Challenge Examples in English

- **Idioms**
 - “Kick the bucket”
 - “Break a leg”
 - “Piece of cake”
- **Word meanings**
 - “Cleave” – to split apart or to stick together
 - “childish” vs. “childlike”
 - “Father figure” vs. “Dad bod”
 - “set” has >430 distinct meanings
- **Language evolves and meanings change**
 - “Wherefore art thou Romeo?”
= “Why are you Romeo”
 - 2 Thess 2:7 KJV “Only he who now letteth will let...”)
=“He who now hinders will continue to hinder.”

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Translations and the Effect on Storytelling *So which translation should I use?*



How will
I know?

How many actual words of Jesus do we know?

- 10 !
- Talitha kum (Ταλιθα κούμ)
- Ephphatha (Έφφαθά)
- Abba (Άββά[ς])
- Raca (Ρακά)
- Mammon (Μαμωνάς)
- Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani (Ήλί, Ήλί, λεμά σαβαχθανί)

>> Greek in Gospels is already a translation of Jesus' Aramaic >>
I.e., English is a translation of a translation!

Translations and the Effect on Storytelling *So which translation should I use?*

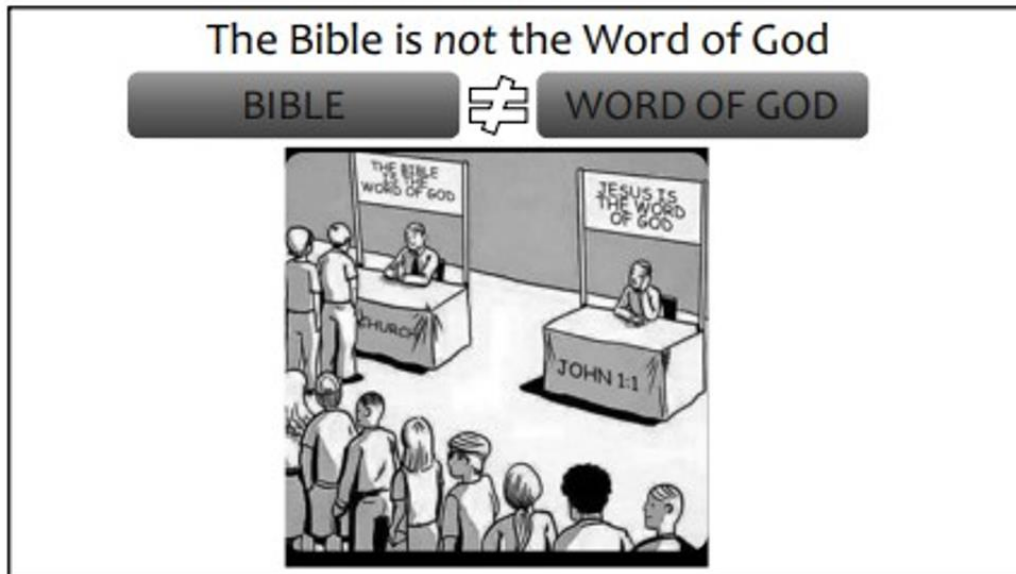
- Translators are traitors. (Italian saying)
- Translation is at best an echo. (George Borrow)
- Translation is the art of failure. (Umberto Eco)
- Translation is one of the few human activities in which the impossible occurs by principle. (Mariano Antolín Rato)
- Every translation is interpretation. (MGVH)

I have undertaken to translate the Bible into German. This was good for me; otherwise I might have died in the mistaken notion that I was a learned fellow.
(Martin Luther)

>> The best we can do is strive to be as faithful, accurate, and clear as possible.

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The Bible is trying to tell you deeper truths

The Bible is not the Word of God

BIBLE ≠ WORD OF GOD

A book, a material object •	• Abstract concept
Collection of ancient documents •	• Documents understanding of history
Records words / text •	• ‘Performs’ the Word
Perceived •	• Experienced
Static •	• Dynamic, living
Stories •	• Meta-narrative story

Hebrews 4.12: For the word of God is living and active...

The Bible is the cradle wherein Christ is laid. (Martin Luther)

*My point: Getting the exact words or the ‘perfect’ translation
does not affect or change the Word of God*

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Takeaways

- **Read the Bible with humility**
 - **No one has the answer on what the Bible says**
 - **Be open to different perspectives**
- **Search for meaning in overall context**
 - **Operate off “first principles”: Love God, love your neighbor”**
- **Word of God cannot be confined to print**
 - **Jesus spoke in parables in part because you can’t always express things directly**
 - **“The kingdom of heaven is like...”**
- **Example: Matthew 14:13-21 Feeding of the 5000**
 - **The “facts” not as important as the message**
 - **Jesus fulfilling his commission to promote obedience to his way requires us to make mercy, healing, empowering, and feeding as central to our efforts as they were to Jesus’s**

In the name of God the Creator; God the Redeemer, and God the Sustainer.
Amen.