

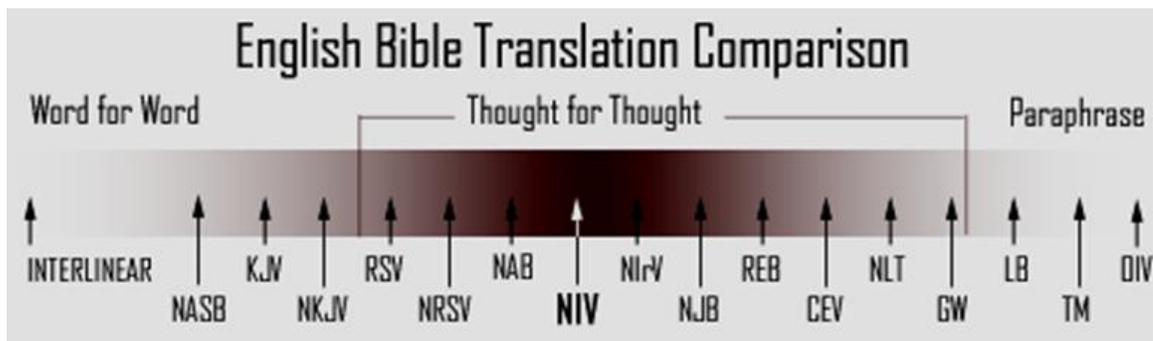
Which version is better?

By Donna Fedukowski, MA Talbot Seminary, MA Linguistics

In a nutshell, here is the issue:

1. There are two main theories for choosing which Greek texts to follow. They are both valid. Go with the one that you prefer. 1) Oldest texts are best (for example, NASB) OR 2) Majority texts are best (for example, KJV)). The differences between the two do not affect any major doctrine.
2. A version can be a fairly literal rendering of the Greek, (KJV or NASB) or it can be a more easily readable rendering of the Greek. The “more readable” you get, the more the translator must insert his “interpretation” of the Greek. Thus, more possibility for human error. Some Bibles go so far to be readable that they are called “paraphrases”, not translations. NIV is a translation. The Message is a paraphrase.
3. Some Bibles are extra difficult to read because they are not only fairly literal, but their English is archaic. This would be the KJV. NKJ maintains most of the KJV text but uses a modern English.

*I would recommend choosing a bible that is as close to the left end of the spectrum below but as far to the right end of the spectrum as you need to go to easily read and understand. A paraphrase is great to get a “new take” on a passage or to compare with a translation. A translation is preferred for serious Bible study.



For those who are interested, here's the loooong version:

The Greek text most closely followed by the translators of the King James Version was Beza's edition of 1598 of the “received text/ textus receptus. The many Greek “received texts” are more or less reprints of the text(s) edited by Erasmus, with only minor variations. They all contain certain “unique” readings which are found in no known Greek manuscript but which are nevertheless found in the editions of Erasmus. One of these is the reading “book of life” in Revelation 22:19. When Erasmus was compiling his text, he had access to only one manuscript of Revelation, and it lacked the last six verses, so he took the Latin Vulgate and back-translated from Latin to Greek. Unfortunately, the copy of the Vulgate he used read “book of life”. All known Greek manuscripts here read “tree of life”.

The textus receptus is often thought to represent the majority reading. (If you look at every existing Greek manuscript and see which reading occurs the most times, that would be the majority reading.) However it varies from the majority reading in 1,838 places.

The translators of the KJV departed from the Beza 1598 version of the textus receptus for the reading in some other published Greek text at least 170 times, and in at least 60 places, the KJV translators abandoned all then-existing printed editions of the Greek New Testament, choosing instead to follow precisely the reading in the Latin Vulgate version. Besides these shortcomings, others also apparently occur in a number of places where a perceived difficulty in the original reading was altered by scribes in the manuscript copying process. Probable examples of this include Mark 1:2 (changing "Isaiah the prophet" to "the prophets," a change motivated by the fact that the quote which follows in 1:3 is from both Malachi and Isaiah), I Corinthians 6:20 (where the phrase "and in your Spirit which are God's" seems to have been added after the original "in your body," which is the subject under consideration in the preceding verses), Luke 2:33 (changing "his father and his mother" into "Joseph and his mother" to 'safeguard' the doctrine of the virgin birth), Romans 8:1, end (borrowing from verse 4, in two stages, the phrase "who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit"), Romans 13:9 (the insertion of one of the Ten Commandments to complete the listing), Colossians 1:14 (the borrowing of the phrase "through his blood" from Ephesians 1:7), etc. ("Westcott & Hort vs. Textus Receptus: Which is Superior? By Douglas Kutilek 5/24/96 kjvonly.org)

Personally, I feel pretty happy with the King James and NKJ which in general follows the "majority reading". Where it follows the Latin Vulgate, such as "book of life" in Rev. 22:19, or where it was "fixed" for doctrinal issues, etc., I am not a fan. (NKJ does accept more manuscripts than the KJV.)

The NASB follows very closely to the Greek versions which are today most widely accepted. These Greek versions often choose the "oldest reading" over the "majority reading" but are based 100% on Greek manuscripts. The NIV (84) is fairly similar to the NASB in its textual choices. (The NIV 2011 revision or the TNIV '05 attempt to be gender neutral.) None of these English versions is perfect, but they are all acceptable and you can't really go far wrong with any of them. They were all translated by theological conservatives. The less literal NIV presents a trade off, an easier read, but more possibility of human error. The RSV and its revisions NRSV and ESV were translated by liberals but are well respected. Sometimes they are close to the KJV and sometimes the NASB. I would not recommend the NEB. It has been updated to the REB. Personally I use the NKJ for memorization because I was brought up on the KJV and already had memorized so many verses from the KJV. I use the NASB for study because it is so literal and so close to the Greek text that I use. In my Bible study lessons, I used to choose whatever translation was closest to my Greek text on any one chapter, but have gone to using the NIV because it is easier to understand than the more literal translations like NASB or NKJ. I enjoy the reading the New Living or even the Message to get a fresh perspective on a passage. That's my two cents worth on versions....or more than you really wanted to know! :)

See <http://www.bible-researcher.com/kutilek1.html> for more details.

Recently there has been some furor about the NIV. I will address some specific questions that have come up:

For instance Is. 14:12, The KJ has "Lucifer", NIV has "morning star". The Hebrew is *helel* which means "morning star, crescent moon, or light bearing object in the sky. New King James has a footnote on "Lucifer" explaining that the word literally means "morning star".

All three translations are acceptable in my opinion. I certainly don't think NIV is heretical at this point.

In Daniel 1:18, the NIV says "chief official". KJ says "eunuch". The Hebrew word is "*sarisim*". The KJ translates this word as "eunuch" 17 times, "chamberlain" 13 times, and "officer" 12 times. The Hebrew word "*sarisim*" can refer to a court official who may or may not be castrated. In Gen. 37:36 it refers to Potiphar, a married man. It can also be used to refer to a castrated male who may also be a court official.

It is reasonable to translate this word in Daniel 1:18 as “eunuch”. It is more conservative, since we don’t know for sure, to translate this word as “official”.

When I see this word, I think, “official who is probably a eunuch”....”

There has been some discussion that NKJ describes behemoth like a dinosaur, while NIV describes it like an elephant. Personally, I see very little difference between the two descriptions. The main difference is “ribs” in NKJ and “limbs” in NIV & NASB. (Hebrew is literally “bones”. In 17 NKJ has “moves”, NIV “sways”, NASB, “bends”. (The Hebrew is *yahpos*, “to sway, to bend, to hang (i.e. hang in a fixed position”)

Job 40:15 NKJ “Look now at the behemoth, which I made *along* with you;

He eats grass like an ox.¹⁶ See now, his strength *is* in his hips, And his power *is* in his stomach muscles.¹⁷ He moves his tail like a cedar; The sinews of his thighs are tightly knit.¹⁸ His bones *are like* beams of bronze, His ribs like bars of iron.¹

NIV (84)¹⁵ “Look at the behemoth, which I made along with you and which feeds on grass like an ox. ¹⁶ What strength he has in his loins, what power in the muscles of his belly! ¹⁷ His tail sways like a cedar; the sinews of his thighs are close-knit.

¹⁸ His bones are tubes of bronze, his limbs like rods of iron. ²

NASB (73) Behold now Behemoth, which I made as well as you; He eats grass like an ox. ¹⁶ Behold now, his strength in his loins, and his power in the muscles of his belly, He bends his tail like a cedar; The sinews of his thighs are knit together. His bones are tubes of bronze; His limbs are like bars of iron.

What about all the verses that are left out of the NIV? The following verses have been relegated to footnotes in the NIV due to their choice of textual preferences: Note, most have also been “left out” of the NASB. My thought: They aren’t “removed”, just relegated to footnotes.

**These are also relegated to footnotes in the NASB (1973)*

***These are in brackets in the NASB (1973)*

*Matthew 17:21 – In the footnotes, “But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”

¹ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Job 40:15-18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² [The Holy Bible: New International Version](#). (1984). (Job 40:15-18). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

**Matthew 18:11 – In the footnotes, “The Son of Man came to save what was lost.”

**Matthew 23:14 – In the footnotes, “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Therefore you will be punished more severely.”

*Mark 7:16 – In the footnotes, “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.”

*Mark 9:44 & 9:46 – In the footnotes, “where / ” ‘their worm does not die, / and the fire is not quenched.”

*Mark 11:26 – In the footnotes, “But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your sins.”

*Mark 15:28 – In the footnotes, “and the scripture was fulfilled which says, “He was counted with the lawless ones” (Isaiah 53:12).”

*Luke 17:36 – In the footnotes, “Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left.”

*Luke 23:17 – In the footnotes, “Now he was obliged to release one man to them at the Feast.”

*John 5:3b-4 – In the footnotes, “paralyzed—and they waited for the moving of the waters. 4 From time to time an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after each such disturbance would be cured of whatever disease he had.”

*Acts 8:37 In the footnotes. Some late manuscripts baptized?” Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” The eunuch answered, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”³

*Acts 15:34 – In the footnotes, “but Silas decided to remain there”

*Acts 24:6b-8a – In the footnotes, “him and wanted to judge him according to our law. ⁷ But the commander, Lysias, came and with the use of much force snatched him from our hands ⁸ and ordered his accusers to come before you. By”

*Acts 28:29 – In the footnotes, “²⁹ After he said this, the Jews left, arguing vigorously among themselves.”

*Romans 16:24 – In the footnotes, “²⁴ May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you. Amen.”

*1 John 5:7b-8a – In the footnotes, “Late manuscripts of the Vulgate testify in heaven: the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. ⁸ And there are three that testify on earth: the (not found in any Greek manuscript before the sixteenth century)”

Nathan Noyes, “NIV (do you use the New International Version NIV?)—You Tube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lr-onxCHaLE> sites that the NIV leaves out “Jesus, God, heaven, hell, etc. a certain amount of times”. He is one of many people who only trust the King James bible. He rejects all other English translations, including the NKJ. <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/nathannoyes1/>
1.

³ [*The Holy Bible: New International Version*](#). (1984). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

He is alarmed by the places that “Jesus” and other words are “left out” in the NIV. He has counted 290 times that Jesus is removed, for example. Numbers that aren’t backed up with references don’t mean much to me. Another internet site, <http://dustoffthebible.com/Blog-archive/2015/10/27/is-the-niv-removing-the-name-of-jesus-christ/> gives us the following list.

Note that the times that King James “leaves out” Jesus are far greater than the times that NIV “leaves out” Jesus.

I didn’t have time to look up all the verses, but here they are. I looked up a few and the list seemed to be accurate. In some places, “Jesus” is in the Greek and sometimes not. It is basically a stylistic choice as to whether to use “he” or “Jesus”.

Table is the number of times the KJV has Jesus and the NIV has something else.

Scripture Reference	KJV	NIV_
Matt 9:28		
Matt 13:36		
Matt 17:20		
Matt 17:22		
Matt 18:2		
Matt 24:2		
Mark 5:13		
Mark 7:27		
Mark 11:14		
Mark 14:18		
Luke 7:22		
John 4:16		
John 4:46		
John 8:20		
John 9:1		
John 11:14		
John 11:39		
John 20:15		
John 21:5	Jesus	he
2 Cor 4:11	Jesus	his
Matt 8:29	Jesus , thou Son of God	Son of God
Matt 16:20	Jesus the Christ	the Christ
Romans 15:8		
2 Cor 4:6		
2 Cor 5:18	Jesus Christ	Christ
Col 1:28		
Phile 1:6		
1 Pet 5:10		
1 Pet 5:14	Christ Jesus	Christ
Luke 7:19		
Luke 10:39		
Luke 10:41	Jesus	the Lord

Acts 19:10		
1 Cor 5:5	Lord Jesus	Lord
Rom 16:18	Lord Jesus Christ	Lord Christ
1 Cor 16:22		
2 Tim 4:22	Lord Jesus Christ	Lord
John 19:38	the body of Jesus	the body
Acts 3:26	Son Jesus	servant
Rom 1:3	Son Jesus Christ	Son
<u>Acts 7:45</u>		
<u>Heb 4:8</u>		
<u>(What's the difference?)</u>	Jesus	Joshua
Acts 8:37		
Romans 16:24		[not present, but it is in the footnote]
Col 1:2	Jesus	
John 21:21		
Acts 9:29		
Gal 6:15,		
Eph 3:9		
Eph 3:14	Jesus	[not present]

Such charts are used by KJV-only supporters to “alarm” you that Satan has indeed worked to remove the name of Jesus. Below is the chart inverted.

Places where the NIV says Jesus and the KJV says something else.

Scripture Reference(s)	KJV	NIV
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Matt 4:4
Matt 4:19
Matt 4:21,
Matt 8:24
Matt 9:1
Matt 11:20
Matt 12:22
Matt 12:46
Matt 13:24
Matt 15:3
Matt 15:10
Matt 15:23
Matt 15:39
Matt 16:4
Matt 16:23
Matt 19:8
Matt 19:11
Matt 19:17
Matt 20:23
Matt 21:10
Matt 21:23
Matt 22:34
Matt 24:3
Matt 26:20,
Matt 26:23
Matt 26:25
Matt 27:3
Matt 27:14
Mark 1:10
Mark 1:16
Mark 1:21
Mark 1:35
Mark 1:38
Mark 1:43
Mark 2:4
Mark 2:13
Mark 2:14
Mark 2:23
Mark 3:3
Mark 3:4
Mark 3:13
Mark 3:23
Mark 4:1
Mark 4:9
Mark 4:13
Mark 4:33
Mark 4:28
Mark 5:2
Mark 5:8
Mark 5:9
Mark 5:18
Mark 5:32
Mark 5:35
Mark 5:38
Mark 6:1

he

Jesus

Matt 8:31
Matt 9:32
Matt 12:10
Matt 12:14
Matt 14:35
Matt 16:1
Matt 17:3
Matt 17:14
Matt 18:21
Matt 19:13
Matt 19:16
Matt 20:20
Matt 21:7
Matt 26:62
Matt 27:18
Matt 27:34
Matt 27:48
Mark 1:30
Mark 1:32
Mark 1:34
Mark 2:4
Mark 2:18
Mark 3:2
Mark 3:6
Mark 5:10
Mark 5:12
Mark 5:17
Mark 5:22
Mark 6:54
Mark 7:1
Mark 7:5
Mark 7:26
Mark 8:11
Mark 8:22
Mark 9:15
Mark 9:20
Mark 10:10
Mark 10:13
Mark 11:21
Mark 12:13
Mark 14:1
Mark 14:10
Mark 14:45
Mark 14:46
Mark 14:51
Mark 15:10
Mark 15:16
Mark 15:22
Mark 15:36
Mark 15:39
Luke 4:38
Luke 4:40
Luke 5:1
Luke 5:18
Luke 5:20

him

Jesus

Luke 20:20 Acts 3:16 Acts 13:24	his	Jesus
Matt 17:24 Matt 20:29 Luke 10:38	they	Jesus and his disciples
2 Cor 11:4	whom	Jesus
Acts 10:48	the Lord	Jesus Christ
Acts 18:25	the Lord	Jesus
Mark 16:19 2 Thess 2:8	Lord	Lord Jesus
Acts 16:7	Spirit	Spirit of Jesus
Acts 24:24 Romans 8:34 1 Cor 4:17 Gal 5:24 Eph 3:6 Col 4:12	Christ	Christ Jesus
Acts 9:22	this	Jesus
Acts 13:38 Heb 3:3	this man	Jesus
Mark 3:20 Mark 7:19 Luke 9:31 John 10:40	[not present]	Jesus
Romans 1:4	[not present]	Jesus Christ our Lord
Jude 1:25	[not present]	through Jesus Christ our Lord