

From Manuscripts to Modern

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[0 : 00] Good morning and welcome to part three, session three of a five-part mini-series. And today's session I've entitled From Manuscripts to Modern. And what we're going to do is try and cover how you get from the ancient manuscripts we've been discussing through to the modern Bibles we have today.

And by way of a brief recap, you'll remember in session one we covered the history of God's revelation, how the Bible is the pinnacle or the climax of God's revelation to mankind. He wants us to know him. God wants us to know him. And he has set all of this evidence through creation and many other ways so that there is ample evidence to be 100% certain.

And yet, well, enough to leave us without excuse. And yet there are people who still refuse to believe. And then last week we looked at the history of Scripture, the Bible being 66 books, 39 in the Old Testament, 27 in the New.

And we looked at how they're written, the language is used. And we've talked a little bit about how it's been preserved over the centuries as well. And I kind of didn't really get much into the New Testament last week.

[1 : 19] And so there's a bit more on that today. So today, session three, From Manuscripts to Modern. There's really just two parts to today. Two parts roughly dividing the time in half, hopefully.

The first one is thousands to one. How do we get from thousands of manuscripts to one Bible, one Hebrew Bible, one Greek Bible?

How do we do that? And that, of course, is textual criticism. And that will be our topic. And then the second part is ancient to modern. How do we get from that ancient language then to our modern Bibles today?

And that's focused on the challenge of translating the Bible. And I'll show you some examples as to why that's so challenging. You know, you think, why can't I just stick it in Google Translate and be done?

Because it's not that simple. It's really not that simple. The key takeaways we'll get is textual criticism is the process of seeking the original text.

[2 : 18] As far as we can determine, it's the process of getting to that original God-breathed text from the available manuscripts that we have. And the simple outcome is this.

We can be very confident. Very confident in the Bibles that we have. There's good grounds, ample grounds to be very confident. There are a few questions here and there. But we're talking about how do you spell Bethesda or, you know, a trivial punctuation issue or something of that nature. They're nearly all trivial. And there is zero nil doctrine that's in any kind of doubt. And there's a good reason for that, which I'll go into in session four in more detail.

And then the second outcome, as we talk about translation, is it's really as much an art as it is a science. And actually, what Linda showed us this morning, looking at that Psalm 20, 29, is it's an unusual glimpse.

But it does show you how difficult it can be and how much, how different scholars can come to different opinions. And hopefully today, I'll show you why that's the case.

[3 : 26] And what I'll do to finish is I'll tell you a bit about what I personally use in my studies and why I recommend them. And that will be about 15 minutes, hopefully. So, I wonder if you have ever read this page in your Bible.

It doesn't show up on any of your Bible in a year plans. The principles of translation. The principles of translation. Or something a lot of those lines.

You'll find a preface or something that will tell you in your Bible from the publishers, this is how we have produced your Bibles. Not something that we've just made up.

This is the source. This, of course, is from my New American Standard Bible 1995 edition. If you have an ESV, you'll find a preface that I thought, actually, that is outstanding.

I really appreciated the way that the ESV presented itself. But what it does is it covers those two points. What was the source that we used? And what was our philosophy around how we then translate that into English?

[4 : 30] It covers those two points. So, the New American will say, I think it says something like, the NASV strives to adhere as closely as possible to the original languages of the Holy Scriptures and to make the translation in a fluent and readable style according to the current English usage.

Interesting. The ESV says this, which I'm not going to read all of just for the interest of time, but it says that it is an essentially literal translation. As far as possible, reproducing the precise wording, word for word as much as possible, where it makes sense in English grammar, syntax, and idiom. So, there's a lot there. The ESV one I found to be particularly valuable. But if I meet my goal today, you will understand that page. So, that's the challenge, right?

So, the first section then, from thousands to one, how do we reconstruct that text?

So, that's the challenge that's before us. We talked about last time how God breathed, God inspired the word of God. And what he has preserved for us today is thousands and thousands of texts.

[5 : 50] And it might seem like quite a daunting piece, but I think I would just first make one point on that. There is no other set of historical documents that comes anywhere near the Old and New Testaments when it comes to the wealth of content from which to reconstruct the text.

A couple of historical documents that are often compared would be Julius Caesar's book, or his account of his wars in Gaul, *De Bello Gallico*.

I probably haven't pronounced that correctly. And it's a critical historical document for understanding, for historians to understand what happened back then in the first century before Christ.

We only have 75 manuscripts. And they divide roughly into two families. And they've got distinct differences between them. And it's very difficult, actually, to... And how much of it was just Caesar's fanciful interpretation?

How literal should it be taken? And yet, historians lean on it heavily. And another one that we're often compared to, it would be the works of Plato. He wrote many documents around 400 BC.

[7 : 02] 250 manuscripts or so. But the oldest we have, 895 AD. That's 1,300 years difference. Whereas if you compare it to what we have for the Bible, I think I've got a slide for it here.

The Old Testament, 3,000 Hebrew manuscripts. 8,000 Latin Vulgate, which date from around 400 AD. Super old. 1,500 from the Septuagint, which we often call the LXX.

That's just 50 plus 10 plus 10. That's 70 in Roman numerals. And then there's other sources as well, which Linda mentioned some of today. The Peshitta, the Samaritan Pentateuch.

And there's others as well. So while the Masoretic texts are relatively recent, what the more ancient ones have done is give us great confidence. And we talked about that last week.

So I'm probably restating. The New Testament then. 5,700 Greek manuscripts, which the earliest dating from the 2nd century or earlier.

[8 : 01] We've got early translations in a variety of languages. Latin, Coptic, Syrian, Armenian, Georgian, Gothic, and Arabic. And then we have over a million catalogued quotations of the New Testament in the commentaries and the letters and the correspondence of the early church fathers.

And then in terms of timing, well, I showed you that St. John's fragment last week, which is probably 50 years or less from the original. And then we have complete New Testament.

Complete New Testament. Less than 300 years from the original. So there's really no comparison with any other historical work. We have orders of magnitude more biblical manuscripts, and they are way closer to the source.

And we give God the thanks and the praise for that. God has overseen it. And I think also that he and his amazing timing decided, in just the last century, I'm going to reveal the Dead Sea Scrolls now.

And they will have even more reason, or even less reason for skepticism, I should say. God knew the right time to bring that into our attention.

[9 : 14] Now, for both of the Old and the New Testaments, there is a thing called manuscript traditions. And that is how we, we, as if I'm a scholar, this is how scholars group the manuscripts into different families.

And last week I talked about the Old Testament, quite a bit, and I said, well, how we had the Masoretic. Well, that's one. And that's the primary Hebrew text. The Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scrolls would be other families of the text.

Now, for the New Testament, there's, broadly, there's three traditions or families, and they're on the screen there. You've got the three major traditions. You've got the Alexandrian texts, and those are associated with Egypt, or that region.

And you've got the Codex Sinaiticus, which is the one I showed you last time. From around 350 AD, Codex Vaticanus is another example. The Western texts, they come from the region of Italy, France, and North Africa.

So they're the ones that the Western church would have used, the Western early church would have used. Codex Bezae is a prominent example from the 5th century. And there are documents in both Greek and Latin, all following that tradition.

[10:29] So the Vulgate, by the way, would be classed as in that Western family. And then you have the Byzantine texts, and they come from the Eastern tradition. That's Asian minor, which is Turkey today, Greece.

And actually, this is the bulk. So this is, some sources were telling me it was 90%, others were saying it's 95%, but it's definitely the bulk of the surviving Greek texts are in that group.

So how do we then take all of that and make one Bible? How do we go through all that and then confidently assert, this is the Bible?

And the answer is the process known as textual criticism. And that isn't criticism in the sense of being really mean. It is criticism in the sense of careful analytical study and discussion.

Carefully analysing what we have to try to work out the original wording. And I guess, like translation, it is an art and a science. There are processes, and there are procedures, and there are methods that are used.

[11:39] And yet, at the same time, you can't rigidly apply them in every case. And different interpreters will come up with a different conclusion for different reasons. And we're only going to look at the superficial today, really mostly because it will exhaust my knowledge today.

And secondly, because people do whole seminars in seminary on this topic. They will spend a whole year or more going through.

So what do we look at? What do we consider? So first, we would consider the age of the manuscript. If you have manuscripts that differ, you would look at the age.

And you would say, generally speaking, the older a manuscript is, the less time there has been for change, and therefore it is more likely to be accurate. Simple enough.

Secondly, you would look at the location that it was found. So if you think about the way the gospel spread in the early New Testament period, you had the church radiating out of Israel, out of Judea, out of Antioch, where Paul was based, and they would have taken the earliest copies with them.

[12:54] So to some extent then, if you find a family over here that have one reading, and a family over here that have the same reading, you can say, well, that must have been the reading before they split.

So very early reading. And again, that links to those three families I mentioned, the three textual traditions. So if you have a matched reading that are far, far apart, you might be very confident that that is an early reading.

Doesn't mean it's correct, but it does mean it's very, very early, so you are more likely to consider it correct. Another thing that's considered is, well, what could cause a difference?

What are some of the likely reasons for differences? Now, if you think about the way that a scribe would copy, it's done visually, they wouldn't have dictation going on, they would read, and they would look over here and write, and they would read, and they would write.

So the eye is continually scanning. So I want you to look at this. I was trying to illustrate an example of parablepsis, which is where you get an error because the eye is skipped.

[14:03] If you think about this sentence, she was walking through the valley and singing through the night. Can you see that underlined section is identical, letter for letter. And so if you are copying it letter by letter by letter, and your eye skips to the wrong place and it looks right, you may end up with, she was walking through the night.

And that makes grammatical sense, so you wouldn't necessarily think, oh, that's not correct.

Interestingly, you may also get something like this. She was walking through the valley and singing

through the valley and singing through the night.

You can also get that because, again, the eye has skipped to the wrong place and you've ended up duplicating rather than omitting. Are there examples of this? Yes, there are. One likely example is in 1 Samuel 14, 41, and where it appears that some of the Masoretic text has dropped out.

And the reason we think that is partly because it doesn't quite make sense. And I think I touched on this when we taught it a few weeks ago. But the other reason is because the Septuagint has a much longer reading that makes way more sense.

And you think, ah. And then what's sort of, ah, so annoying, is in the Dead Sea Scrolls, that piece is lost. But from what we can reconstruct from the manuscript, it does appear that there was more space given to that piece.

[15:25] So it looks like there was a case of parablepsis and the scribe missed a bit. There is a somewhat amusing manuscript of Matthew 7 where the hapless scribe missed a bit out and he ended up writing that the wise man's house on the rock fell with a great fall.

Oops. But what that shows you is, you could, even if that Matthew 7 example had been, you know, there was a whole ton of manuscripts that had it, you would say, well, I can see how that happened. And I know, therefore, that it is likely, or very, very likely, to be incorrect based on the fact that it don't really match the flow of the story either. So that's that one. And the last one I wanted to talk about was the difficulty of the text.

The difficulty of the text. Now this one's a bit more challenging for me to describe. But basically this is referring to the fact that if a scribe is going to make a change on purpose, then what they are more likely to do is to try and harmonize the texts and to try and smooth out difficult or hard readings.

Or they may want to try and remove things that are offensive, if you can believe it. And an example of that would be if you compare 2 Samuel 2 verse 8 with 1 Chronicles 8.33, you will find the name of Saul's son.

[16:49] One passage will call him Eshbaal, and the other one will call him Ish-bosheth. And you think, hang on, which is it? Well, Baal, as you may know, is the name of the Canaanite god.

Horrible, horrible deity. And bosheth is the Hebrew word for shame. And what is believed is that they wouldn't even say the name Baal. They just wouldn't.

And they would insert instead, or they would pronounce the word bosheth. So it's a change for sensibilities reasons. Now here's another example that I want to show you.

This is a hard one. John 1.18. You may know there is a lot of controversy about this. And I want to talk through why our Bibles say what they say.

So this is the... 1 John 1.18 in the 1995 edition of the New American Standard Bible says, No one has seen God at any time.

[17:47] The only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, he has explained him. Now look at the New King James. It says this, No one has seen God at any time.

The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him. So I ask you, is it God or is it Son?

There's no easy explanation for the difference. It would have been one Greek letter difference. One Greek letter difference. If you're interested in writing it down, it would have been either a theta for Theos or it would have been an upsilon for Huios, Son.

One letter difference. But they look very different. So it wasn't going to be a smudge or something like that. It would have been a deliberate change. So where in does the discrepancy lie?

Well, it lies in the Byzantine text tradition says only begotten Son. The Alexandrian tradition says the only begotten God.

[18:50] And only to add to my confusion, I thought this morning, I thought, I'll check the Western and see what that says. Codex Bezae, it also says Son. Interesting, I thought. So why then is it that we have in most Bibles, actually, ESV, New American, most Bibles do lean most of their weight on the Western and therefore they put God.

And the answer is simply this. The phrasing only begotten God is a lot more difficult. It's a hard saying. And there would have been strong motivation for scribes to soften that and change it to match, harmonize with John 3.16, the only begotten Son.

There is a motivation to do that. There is no motivation that can be conceived of for scribes to poets, only begotten God, if John originally wrote only begotten Son.

And again, the Alexandrian manuscripts are the oldest and therefore most scholars today, most, many scholars today consider that the most likely original reading is only begotten God. And that is what we have in our Bibles. Now, is that free of controversy? No. Will you find scholars arguing differently? Yes. And this, as I said, this is one of the most notoriously difficult texts to interpret.

[20 : 18] But I wanted to show you the principles and that I have probably spent too much time already. So, what's the output? What's the outcome? All of this analysis will lead you to one Old Testament and one New Testament in their original languages.

The New American Standard Bible puts in its principles of translation that it uses this, the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, which from now on is BHS as far as I'm concerned.

There's a link there, dbible.de and you can, and I will send out these slides at some point and you can go there and you can read the BHS for yourself.

And in terms of what it is, look, it's the Masoretic text. It's basically, it is that Leningrad codex that I showed you last time with the addition of what they call apparatuses.

Apparatuses, what on earth is that? It's a fancy word for saying footnotes, basically. It is notes and commentaries to explain or to illuminate the scholar as they read it as to if, and if there is any doubt or discussion and why.

[21 : 33] So it allows people who are using the BHS as a source to then make their own decisions as to what it should be. There are other Old Testaments. The Jewish Publication Society's Tanakh is another example of a complete single volume Hebrew Old Testament.

That one sticks very closely to the Masoretic. The BHS does refer to Septuagint and other versions if it believes of the scholars believe there's good grounds to do so.

Now the New Testament, now this is where again there's some controversy and it mostly comes back to that Byzantine slash Alexandrian preference. And also I am saving you centuries worth of Bible history here because again that would have been another semester in your hypothetical seminary class.

But there are a couple of things that I cannot fail to include. The first one is this. This is the Greek New Testament 1516 that was published by a gentleman called Desiderius Erasmus.

Erasmus of Rotterdam. He published his Greek New Testament and actually you can see from the slides it's actually bilingual. You've got the Greek and the Latin side by side and the Greek that he has there is mostly from the Byzantine tradition.

[22 : 58] He had 12 Greek manuscripts from which he worked but he also leaned very heavily on the Latin Vulgate and actually there are places where he blatantly copied the Latin back to Greek.

If you are inclined you can read the whole thing on that link. Originalbibles.com Enjoy. Now this was the standard though for years, for centuries, this was the Reformers Bible and it went through some iterations but when Tyndall came along, when Luther came along, when the English translations were being made this is what they used.

the *Textus Receptus*. And that tradition goes all the way through to the King James and the King James that was commissioned 1611 is based on this tradition, based on the Byzantine texts.

So you need to be aware of the *Textus Receptus* for that reason. And then you also need to know these two handsome gentlemen. Brooke Westcott and Fenton Hort.

These two guys published their Greek New Testament in 1881. And they actually were the ones who introduced a lot of our theory and process around textual criticism.

[24 : 20] They are the two who introduced those classifications of Byzantine, Western and Alexandrian. And they also had one that they called neutral, which seems to be a very loaded term.

this is the neutral one. But what they did is they moved away from the previous general principle was that most manuscripts wins, hence Byzantine.

And they introduced the more nuanced approach. And again, I went through some of the principles that we use today. And we can thank those guys to some extent for those. But they did argue, rightly or wrongly, that the Byzantine or many of the Byzantine manuscripts were corrupt.

and they added material like John chapter 5 verse 4, which you will not find in your Bible. 1 John 5 verses 7 and 8, which you will find in a very, very abridged form in your Bible.

And those gentlemen were the ones who argued that they were additions. Now, you can imagine how well that went down when they said that the Vulgate and the *Textus Receptus* that had been loved and cherished for generations was corrupt.

[25 : 28] But think what you will, they did introduce a new level of scholarship. So, again, still on the New Testament, for our New American Standard, the outcome was that they used this for the New Testament, the Novum Testamentum Graeci.

Easy for you to say. For now on, that is going to be NA28. The Nestle Allands NA28 refers to the 28th edition of the Novum Testamentum.

And, again, that's largely based on the Alexandrian texts, again, using other available manuscripts where it makes sense to do so.

But, again, there are those who would argue for the Byzantine priority. And I'm making you aware of this because it is relevant. And there may be some in this room who's looked at this and thought, no, I think the Byzantine is right.

And what I'm saying to you is that the majority today, the majority of Bibles and modern scholars will argue that the NA28 is the best for the New Testament.

[26 : 36] There are plenty out there who will argue for the Byzantine. If you want to read that lovely long post, you're free to do it. I don't personally find it too convincing.

So, if you read your ESV, NIV, they will find that they are all based on NA28. Right, summary.

This is the summary. When you boil it down, though, and I've said a whole bunch of words and you may be thinking, is there really any hope of reconstructing the original? And Bart Ehrman, I'm not sure how to say his name, he famously pointed out that, quote, there is more variation among our manuscripts than there are words in the New Testament.

Well, actually, that's a false equation because what he did there is he added up all the words in one manuscript and compared it to the number of manuscripts, which is thousands.

So, that's a bizarre error for him to make. Peter Gurry there, his statistic was that there is one variant per 434 words copied.

[27 : 49] One variation. variation. And the vast majority of those variations are completely trivial. Completely trivial. Exactly. Is that letter capitalized?

Are those two, is that joined together? Was it separate? It's very, very trivial. So, there are just a small number of places where one needs to be diligent and careful, such as John 1.18, which I showed you.

And that's there because God has chosen to use fallen man to transmit his text through the centuries, but he has put some wonderful safeguards in place, and again, that's next week's topic, and I'm going to show you why, even though there are some things, the doctrine of the Trinity is not in doubt because John 1.18 is in doubt, and the reason is because the doctrine of the Trinity is all through the Scriptures, and that's why.

So, God has preserved his word through miraculous means. It's just orders of magnitude more reliable than any other ancient text, and he has preserved it by his spirit, and we can have great confidence.

So, secondly, then, we are on to this part, the ancient to the modern. How do we translate this? How do we take those manuscripts, the NA28, the BHS, and translate them into our modern English Bibles today?

[29 : 20] Now, I need to, we started talking a little bit about this last time. You may remember I pointed out this book to you by Jeff A. Benner, which is super helpful in learning about the ancient Hebrew language.

language. When you are translating, when you are translating any language, you are partially translating and you're partially interpreting.

Even if you translate German into English, you cannot just go word for word, because you will have a model of grammar. You have to interpret it, which is why it grates on me a little bit when people say, I read word for word translations.

No, you do not, because it would not make sense in English. The thing with Hebrew in particular is it's a very, very long way away from us, our Western thinking.

The culture of the ancient Hebrews is no longer with us. Actually, you can thank the Greco-Romans for that. In the time that the New Testament was written, that is when there was a bit of a cultural shift from the Eastern ancient Hebrew agricultural society-based thinking to the Greco-Roman philosophical thinking.

[30 : 41] In Acts 9.29 there's this reference to the Hellenistic Jews, and that is the Jews who started to embrace that Western way of thinking, that Greek culture and language.

So I say that because we have to keep in mind when we're interpreting the Hebrew, that it is not just a different language, it is a foreign culture as well. Now, we've talked about this already.

In Hebrew, you have the letters carry meaning. In English, the letter A means nothing. Ah. The letter B, it means nothing.

Etc. In Hebrew, however, the letters do have meaning. meaning. And we've seen it as we've been going through Psalm 119, of course, haven't we?

And actually, quite often they have multiple depths of meanings. And what I wanted to do, what I thought I would do this morning is I'll just show you one little curiosity that I just find fascinating.

[31 : 43] It's a great insight into the Hebrew language that I hope you appreciate. We start with the letter Aleph. The letter Aleph. And we talked about this a couple of weeks ago. And that graphic there is from Hebrew4Christians.com and there's a link at the bottom if you want to read more about the Aleph bait.

And this is the letter Aleph. There's the original pictograph which is an ox head. And the meaning of the letter Aleph is strength. It means strength. Why?

Because the ox is the strongest. The ox is a strong creature. So again, an agricultural background. Secondly, the letter bait. The bait and the pictograph that you can see there that looks to our minds like a little swirl.

That is a from above view of a tent with the inner chamber and the outer chamber. It's a tent. It's a house. And then by extension the letter bait means house.

In fact, the word bait in Hebrew means house. But by extension it also means the household or the family. So if you put those two letters together, aleph and bait, you have the word ab.

[32 : 54] Strength plus household means the strength of the family and it is the Hebrew word for father. Ab. Now, this letter is one we already looked at today, the letter he.

And I had a slightly different pictograph, but you can see very clearly the little guy going whoa! wow! And it means a sigh, a breath, look at that!

But also the spirit and the essence, and that is the meaning that carries forward for us today. What happens when you take that word for spirit or essence and place it within the word for father?

The essence of the father, ahav, is the Hebrew word for love. Isn't that amazing? I love it. I just think that's fantastic. But that is the way the Hebrew language is constructed.

So if you translate that ahav into love, correct, but what you miss is the descriptive aspect, is talking about the essence of the father, love.

[33 : 55] God is love. I love it. And just for completeness, that two letters would be called a parent root in Hebrew. Those three letters there would be called a child root.

Benner's book catalogues every single parent root for your interest. Very interesting read, especially if you're having trouble sleeping. But it is very, very insightful. It is very insightful.

Good. So, what's next? I think it's this. Yes, so Hebrew thinking then. So just going through this, Hebrew language, Hebrew thinking is often descriptive.

In the words, there is that descriptive element. God is love, the father is love. It isn't just a word that means love. It's a descriptive word that calls to mind the strength of the father.

Sorry, the heart of the father, the essence of the father, who is in himself the strength of the household. The language also speaks in terms of relationship. And this is actually something that's true of many languages.

[34 : 59] But in Hebrew, you would not say, I have a book. You would say, Yeshli Sefer, Yeshli Sefer, which means there is to me a book.

Literally, that's what it means. So if you wanted to literally translate that phrase, you would say, there is to me a book. See how it is a relational expression rather than I have. And Russian, Japanese, Gaelic, you're studying that one, haven't you?

They all have the same sense. There is to me a book. And so the language is thinking not in terms of ownership and control, but in terms of relationship.

So it is a relational language rather than descriptive and control. And then this, it is a concrete language rather than abstract. Concrete doesn't mean the material. It means that it is about physical things that you can touch.

Sorry, you can sense. So touch, see, hear, etc. A great example to show you this is Psalm 1, verses 3 to 4. What is the blessed man like?

[36 : 01] Describe him. Well, he's like this. He would be like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither, and in whatever he does he prospers. The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind blows away. Now, to some extent, we would look at that and say, ah, beautifully poetic. Yes, that's true, but that's true of the whole language.

It is a very descriptive language that uses those kind of things. One example that I always find quite amusing is the word for anger in Hebrew is a word that literally means hot-nosed, or flared nostrils. And someone who is slow to anger literally says, you've got a long nose. Long nose, descriptive, right? Their nose takes a long time to get hot.

Has God got a long nose? No, he doesn't have a long nose, but he's slow to anger, and that is the way that the Hebrew mind conceives of it, in concrete things. And then this, it is also focused on function rather than appearance.

[37 : 10] If I was going to describe my car, if someone asked me, can you describe your car, I might say, well, it's black, it's got four wheels, it's made of metal and glass. Whereas if a Hebrew mind would say, describe your car, well, I get in it and I use it to go places.

That's my car. So they think their mind goes to function rather than appearance. And this is why Linda showed us Psalm 29 verse 9 earlier.

And one of the reasons it's so difficult to interpret is because the word for dear, Hines, is the same. I a lot.

Deers, it's already a plural, is the same for oak trees. Why would the word be the same? Because the word literally means the strength of the forest, the strong one of the forest.

What is the strong one of the forest? Well, if you're thinking as a lumberjack, you would think, well, oak is the strongest wood in the forest, whereas the deer, or the stag deer specifically, is the strong one of the forest, at least in their mind, or the strong leader.

[38 : 18] So how do you interpret a verse that would literally say, the strong ones of the forest? Either way. Either way.

And we talked about the word literally for father means the strength of the family. We talked about that already. So to summarize, then, it's tricky to translate.

The Hebrew letters carry meaning, and they describe things in terms of relationship, in terms of how they appear, and in terms of relationship, which is so different often to our Western thinking.

And so when we try to translate it into language that we know, it can be hard. And that is why so often when we translate Hebrew, it is interpretation as much as it is translation.

Phew! Now let's talk about Koine Greek, everyone's favorite topic. Koine Greek. Now, Koine Greek is very different to Hebrew, as I mentioned last week.

[39 : 28] Koine Greek is common Greek. That distinguishes it from the original Greek of, for example, Homer's Iliad, and the classical Greek that was ridiculously complex.

Koine Greek is still very complex, and modern Greek spoken today is simplified from that again. Koine Greek, abstract, precise, structured, very, very rich, perfect for technical discussion on theology or philosophy.

A couple of examples to illustrate that. We have one word for another, and it just means another.

Greek has *allos*, which means another of the same kind, *heteros*, which means another of a different kind.

We have one word for love, which can offend my wife. If I said, I love you, I love pizza, and she would get very upset. Greek has four words for love, four, because it is very precise.

But then as a translator, if I see the word *storge*, for love, or if I see the word *phileo*, or if I see *eros*, or if I see *agape*, what am I going to put?

[40 : 44] Love. Tough. It's tough. Now, when you are interpreting a verb in Greek, you have to consider no fewer than five things, and all of this is encapsulated in that one word.

The person, is it me, is it you, is it her, the person who's doing it, first, second, third person, the number of people doing it, is it just me, or is it us?

Is it you or you? English fails there, doesn't it? You or y'all. So, number, is it singular or plural?

Thirdly, it has tense, and tense, and also something called aspect, and there are six different tenses in Greek, which help to distinguish between something that is done and done, something that is done and continually being done, something that is done and having ongoing impact.

Earlier, I said this, we have been seeing in Psalm 119, and that's an example of something that we did in the past, but we are continually doing now. But how many words do I have to use to express that?

Have been seeing, not three. So, six different tenses together with aspects. Fourthly, there is the mood. mood. There are four moods.

[42 : 04] I think I've got that switched on my slide. There's three voices and four moods. My slide's wrong there, sorry about that. The voices are active, passive, and middle, and the moods I didn't write down, so I can't tell you.

But the moods have to do with things like, is it factual? Is it hypothetical? Is it something that I wish for? that's what the mood has to do with. So, tense mood, voice, number, person.

You're confused yet? Ali's like, no, love English. And some of this does, oh yes, and this is my links slide, so some links there that are useful if you want to get into a bit more of those things, they'll be in the notes.

So, English has many of these concepts, but they don't perfectly overlap, and in order to render it in English, you have to use a lot of auxiliary words like, ah, was, will, did, have.

Whereas in Koine Greek, it's all in that one word. So, so what? Why do we care? Well, here's why we care. Look at this, look at this verse. This is from the American 95 edition, and it says, 1 John 3 verse 6, it says, no one who abides in him sins.

[43 : 25] No one who sins has seen him or known him. And you read that verse, you think, oh, will I sin? Ah, does that mean I don't abide in him?

Does it mean I don't even know him? John, what are you saying? Well, the problem here is, we can't adequately translate that verb sins.

We just can't. The Greek word has present tense with ongoing aspect, and it means that habitual ongoing sin. And that's why, actually, if you read this in the 2020 edition, they see the problem and they insert that word in italics.

No one who remains in him sins continually. No one who sins continually has seen him or known him. So, that's not there. So, is that a translation? Not really, it's an interpretation.

But you have to interpret it because a literal translation would mislead. Another one is Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 8.

[44 : 31] For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of yourselves, it is a gift of God. Now, I'm just looking at that first part there. For by grace you have been saved. The Greek is perfect present tense.

So, it actually is both you have been saved and you are saved. So, it is that done in the past with permanent ongoing benefit.

And that's why if you read the New English, they decide to put the opposite. By grace you are saved through faith. Both of those are accurate and they're both inaccurate because neither one really encapsulates the whole thing.

So, a couple of the challenges that we face when translating. Now, let's talk about Bible versions and we are coming to a close now. You'll probably be glad to hear.

So, we've surveyed a couple of things. We've surveyed which, if I'm going to make an English Bible, the first decision is what are the manuscript editions I'm going to follow, which is going to be my primary source, which is going to be my secondary, and again your principles of translation will tell you which the translators have chosen to use, and then what is going to be my translation approach, and this is where everyone has a different view on what's best, but this is a spectrum, and you will find many different examples of this, and people will put their Bibles in different places, but you have effectively a spectrum from literal on the left, word for word, which as I've said already, I believe word for word is a misnomer.

[46 : 08] You cannot really have word for word unless you have an interlinear Bible, which incidentally I will talk about in a minute. Then you have thought for thought, and on the far extreme right you have idea for idea, which is a paraphrase.

Now, having been through all of this study and spent hours and hours on it this week, it seems to me that this is far more of an impact, this has far more impact on the actual outcome of the Bible than the original text.

text. The text is, we are adequately sufficiently confident now, very, very confident now, that it really is all about what approach to translate will we take.

And that is why we have this myriad different English Bibles today. So, let's talk about this a little bit. So, formal equivalence, or as the ESV put it, essentially literal, which I think is a great way of putting it, this is where the translators seek to preserve the original language as much as they possibly can. And what they'll do is they'll try to use the same English word throughout to translate the original. So, a good example of this would be the word *chesed*, which I've talked about before.

[47 : 25] *Chesed* is a challenging Hebrew word to translate because it encapsulates so much. And generally what you'll find, the American 95 edition will always put loving kindness.

So, when you see loving kindness, you know that means *chesed*. If you've studied it. Now, whereas a dynamic equivalent Bible, like the new international version, NIV, may put something different depending on the context, because what they're trying to do is to show us what they believe the aspect of that word that the original writer meant.

Now, I have to say, I didn't check the NIV, so I don't know what they've said, but that's the kind of thing that would happen. So, word for word or formal equivalence, that is where our NASB sits, right proudly sitting on the far left of the chart.

Yes! ESV is there as well, along with a number of other Bibles. Thought for thought, that's your NIV, it's your New Living Translations, and what they've done is they have prioritised clarity, ease of reading, flow of English, rather than word perfect faithfulness.

And I would say that isn't to say it's weaker, but the point is you have to be aware of the principles that they were trying to do. I would argue that there is value in reading those types of translations for devotional reasons or to supplement reading word for word, because there are drawbacks to word for word.

[48 : 52] Sometimes it's just, it can sound a little bit, well, not English, but other times you can miss the breadth of the word. If you've always used the same English for a wider word, you can miss some of that.

So, and then paraphrase, which obviously you've got the message, which many are familiar with, you should avoid it for many reasons. I would argue that paraphrase isn't fundamentally a bad idea. I would argue though that it is not a Bible anymore. It's trying to do, what I think Eugene Peterson was trying to do with his is effectively produce a commentary. The problem is I think his philosophy was wrong.

Talking about being playful with the text doesn't feel me with confidence. But also this, it's just one bloke. Most Bibles will have a whole team of scholars, most commentaries, a whole team of scholars, checkers, proofreaders, anything produced by one person, you've got to be sceptical of. So avoid, avoid. So why do we use the New American Standard Bible? Well, partly because it sits on the far left. And when you go word for word, so the closer you are to the left, you have a translation.

[50 : 08] The further you go to the right, you have an interpretation. And we believe that it is our role as the leaders of this church to try and help by the Holy Spirit's power to interpret the scriptures for you, and that's what we do in the sermon.

Now, that's not to say that some interpretation beforehand is bad, it should be, but word for word is ideal for the study. It minimises the risk of the theology of the translator coming through than you would get with an interpretation.

So wrapping it up, I recommend the New American Standard Bible as your number one Bible choice for that reason. It is the, I think that is true, it is the strongest from a word for word perspective.

I also do recommend heartily the ESV. It is still a version that I love. It's like an old friend to me because it was the one I studied for the longest time.

The ESV, the study Bible is also excellent, but in my opinion it is just, it's one of the most transparent, you know, their principles of translation is so detailed.

[51 : 18] The ESV is based on the 1971 revised standards, so it has a very rich heritage that goes back right through the history of the English Bibles. And actually the NASB is similar.

The original NASB from 1971 was based on the American Standard Version, which is based on the English revised version of 1881 and all the way back.

So there's a long and proud tradition and foundation for strength, which is valuable. Now I also wanted to recommend one other Bible that I love, and this is the NET, or the New English Translation.

Now I would say this to you, if I had to pick one Bible to take away to a desert island, and that's all I had, it would be this one. It would be the New English Translation.

And the reason is, ironically, not because I think the text is the best, but it is because it has over 60,000 interpreters and translators' notes. If you look at that picture, the Bible text is just the middle bit there.

[52 : 19] All the rest of that is explanatory notes as to why it has been translated the way it has. And when I'm preparing to preach, I find it so helpful. Every one of the passages that I've talked about today that's been controversial, there is paragraphs in the New English Translation to help us understand why.

And I find that massively helpful. So I say that the text is kind of moving towards the thought for thought a lot of the time, but because they are so transparent and so clear as to why they've made the decision they have, I find it super valuable.

I will say this though, I only have an electronic copy, so it doesn't look like that, but I have all the notes there and it's super, super valuable. And then the last thing, the last recommendation, which I know some of you are going to switch off, but I'm going to include it anyway, it's that.

Interlinear Bible study. Interlinear study is where you have the original language and you have the English translation line by line. So that is literally just a screenshot of my Samuel studies from Logos Bible software.

And for the vast majority of Christendom, this has not been possible. You just can't do it. Even the scribes would have to have different books and the lay person could not do this, whereas we can do this for free today.

[53 : 45] Blue Letter Bible, you can do this for free today. And I highly recommend a look and it will tell you, I mean, yes, it may be too much information, but it is such a useful thing to try and get into.

So I would encourage you to check that out, maybe watch some YouTube videos on how to get started with interlinear Bible study. So I guess my final recommendation is it's very valuable to own and read and study multiple translations.

for the simple reason that there is no one perfect English Bible, there can't be. There cannot be because God didn't write English. He wrote in Hebrew and he wrote in Greek and English is too far away from those languages to lean only on one Bible.

It's super helpful to read and study multiple. For serious study, you need an essentially literal translation. you need it because only then are you close to the original languages.

But the last point is, and really this is going to be all of session five, is the word of God is spiritually discerned. So I know I've gone into a whole load of detail, I know I've gone way over time, sorry, but I didn't want to, I hope I haven't given the impression that it's super difficult and it's only for clever, smart people.

[55 : 05] It's not. There's a lot that goes into it, but what we can do is we can trust the Bibles that I've mentioned for sure, and we can trust the Holy Spirit to teach us and guide us as we read.

And that is what I'm going to talk about in session five, the way that the Spirit guides and leads us all. But next week is going to be the nature and reliability of Scripture, and I'm going to show you proofs of the supernatural origin of the Bible and its perfect reliability in terms of prophetic witness. So hopefully that was useful. I'm going to pray and then it will be communion. Thank you, Father, for these things that we've discussed today. Lord, I pray that it's been helpful.

I pray, Lord, that it's been useful to consider the wonderful, wonderful thing that it is, the Word of God, that you have preserved for the ages, that you have preserved in such abundance, Lord, and that which has been studied for centuries, leading us to the point of such confidence today in what we have, Lord.

And we thank you, Lord, for the wealth of godly men and godly people who have studied and poured over the Scriptures to produce the modern Bibles that we have today.

[56 : 15] And we do pray and ask that by your Spirit you would lead us in our studies, that you would help us to love and cherish your Bible and lead us to a great depth of understanding. Hallelujah.

Thank you, Lord, in Jesus' mighty name. Amen. Amen. God bless you guys. God bless you guys. Let's go.