

Session 2 - Do English Bibles Say the Same Thing?

SESSION THESIS

English Bibles do not always communicate equivalent information at the same point. Visible differences must therefore be classified as interpretive translation, presence or absence, different underlying words, or editorial presentation before the textual question can be addressed honestly.

The Session Argument



Controlling Questions

- ¹ Which English differences may arise from legitimate translation?
- ² When do two readings communicate materially different information?
- ³ How does editorial placement affect what the ordinary reader receives as Scripture?

A Shared Label Does Not Establish Textual Equivalence

THESIS

English editions bearing the title Bible must be compared by the information and function they communicate, because the shared label alone cannot establish that their texts are equivalent.

The Shared Label Creates an Expectation of Identity

- Each edition is marketed, purchased, carried, preached, and read as the Bible.
- Readers naturally expect the same scriptural identity beneath the shared label.
- The Bible was defined by canonical books, inspired and preserved words, and genuinely equivalent translation.
- Session 2 now asks whether English editions always communicate the same textual information at the same point.

Classification Comes before a Comprehensive Textual Defense

- This session:
 - Compare visible English readings
 - Classify the kinds of difference
 - Test functional equivalence
 - Establish when a textual decision cannot be avoided
- This session does not:
 - Defend the Textus Receptus, Majority Text, or modern critical text comprehensively
 - Determine the original reading in every passage
 - Assume automatically that the longer or shorter reading is original
 - Treat every difference as equally substantial
 - Claim that translation requires identical English wording
 - Claim that every difference destroys a Christian doctrine

Classification Must Precede Adjudication

- Present or absent rather than added or deleted
- Different wording rather than corruption
- Main text, brackets, margin, or footnote rather than assuming authority from placement
- Distinguish two tasks.
 - Classification: What changed, and what kind of difference is visible?
 - Adjudication: Which reading is original or preserved?
- This session performs the first task and demonstrates why the second cannot be avoided.

Notes

Four Categories Distinguish Translation from Textual Difference

THESIS

Visible English differences must be classified as interpretive translation, presence or absence, different underlying words, or editorial presentation before their significance can be judged responsibly.

Category One: Interpretive Translation

- The translator works from the same or substantially the same wording but must interpret lexical range, idiom, grammar, syntax, or context.
- Controlling question:
 - Could both expressions communicate the same relevant information and function?
- Purpose:
 - Prevent every visible difference from being mislabeled as textual corruption.

Category Two: Presence or Absence

- One textual form contains a word, phrase, sentence, verse, or passage that another does not contain.
- Controlling question:
 - Does this material belong to the inspired wording at this point?
- Purpose:
 - Show that description can remain neutral while a textual decision becomes necessary.

Category Three: Different Underlying Words

- Both forms contain wording, but the readings identify a different person, action, object, description, or relationship.
- Controlling question:
 - What information changes?
- Purpose:
 - Demonstrate non-equivalence without relying only on absent-verse examples.

Category Four: Editorial Presentation

- A reading may appear in the main text, brackets, a margin, a footnote, or nowhere visible.
- Controlling question:
 - What does the ordinary reader functionally receive as Scripture?
- Purpose:
 - Show that acknowledging an alternative does not make it identical to the reading printed as text.

Three Questions Govern Every Comparison

- What changed?
- What kind of difference is it?
- Can both forms communicate the same information and function at this point?
- A harmless sentence supplies a practice comparison.
 - “He began at noon.”
 - “He started at twelve o'clock.”
 - “He began at nearly noon.”
 - “He began.”
 - “She began at noon.”

- The comparison distinguishes equivalent expression, changed qualification, absent information, and changed participant without adjudicating a textual tradition.

Notes

Category One: Interpretive Translation

THESIS

Translation necessarily involves interpretation, so visible English differences may be equivalent-but equivalence must be demonstrated from wording, grammar, and context rather than assumed from the shared label.

Translation Transfers Meaning Rather than Fixed Glosses

- Translation transfers meaning rather than mechanically replacing every source word with one fixed English gloss.
- Translators must interpret:
 - Lexical range
 - Idiom
 - Grammatical relationships
 - Syntax
 - Context
- Different English wording can faithfully represent the same underlying form.
- The possibility of legitimate variation does not make every variation equivalent.

Anchor One: John 1:5

- Compare comprehended, overcome, and grasped.
- The principal Greek verb can carry senses of apprehending, grasping, or overcoming.
- The editions may be interpreting one underlying form rather than translating different Greek words.
- Footnotes cross the visible main-text groupings and disclose recognition of the semantic range.
- Context and Johannine usage must determine the preferable rendering.

- What it proves:
 - Different English words can arise from the same underlying wording.
- What it does not prove:
 - Every English difference is therefore equivalent.

Anchor Two: Luke 17:21

- Compare “within you,” “in the midst of you,” and “among you.”
- The same phrase permits more than one English construal.
- Jesus' immediate audience-the Pharisees-affects the contextual decision.
- A rendering can remain grammatically possible while being contextually less likely.
- The example demonstrates that interpretation cannot be removed from translation.

Anchor Three: Romans 9:5

- The selected main texts connect the description with Christ, while some footnotes disclose alternative punctuation and grammatical relationships.
- Early Greek manuscripts do not supply modern English punctuation.
- A comma or full stop can affect the apparent referent of “God.”
- The example carries doctrinal significance without being a simple case of an absent Greek clause.
- The example belongs to grammatical and punctuational interpretation; its full exegesis remains outside this classification exercise.

Rapid Comparisons Reinforce the Translation Category

- Matthew 6:13 - “evil” or “the evil one”
- Second Timothy 2:15 - “rightly dividing” or “correctly handling”
- Philippians 2:6 - “robbery,” “a thing to be grasped,” or “exploited”
- Romans 5:11 - “atonement” or “reconciliation”
- First Corinthians 7:36 - “virgin,” “betrothed,” or “virgin daughter”
- Controlling questions:
 - Same underlying wording or different?
 - What interpretive decision is visible?

The Category Establishes a Defined Kind of Difference

- Different words may faithfully communicate the same text. Equivalence is possible, but it must be demonstrated in context.
- What if one form contains words the other does not contain?

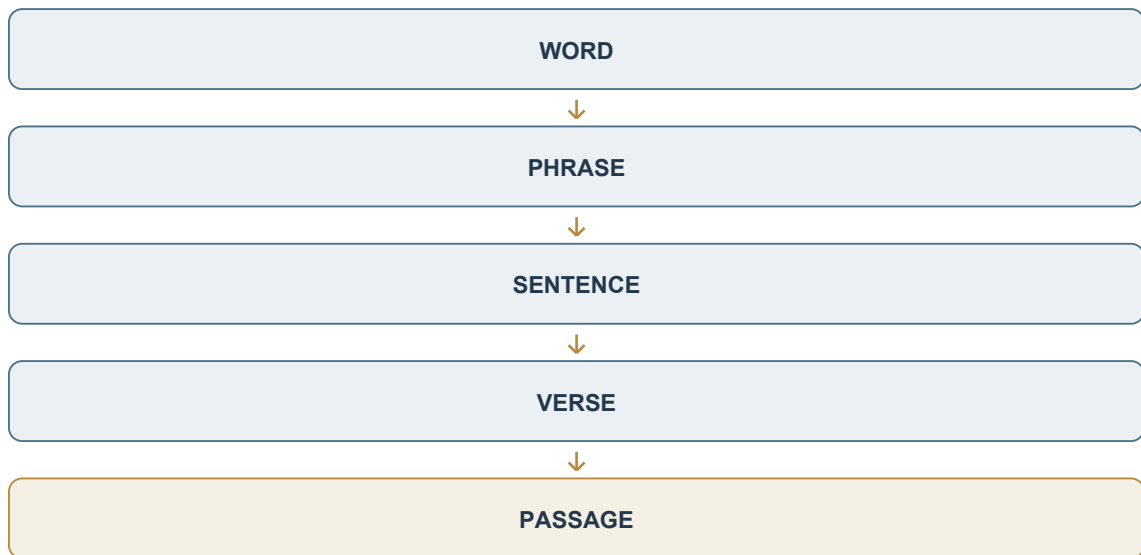
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Category Two: Presence or Absence

THESIS

A textual form containing a word, phrase, verse, or passage and a form lacking it cannot both reproduce the same verbal content at that point, even though the English comparison alone does not establish which form is original.

Presence or Absence Ranges from a Word to a Passage



- The amount of material changes, but the identity question remains:
 - Does this material belong to the inspired text here?
- The neutral terms presence and absence remain appropriate until direction has been demonstrated.

Anchor One: Matthew 5:22

Matthew 5:22 - King James Version

SCRIPTURE

22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

- Compare anger “without a cause” with anger stated without the qualification.
- The phrase is short but changes the qualification of the anger being condemned.
- The longer and shorter forms do not perform exactly the same function.
- The difference may affect preaching and application.
- The English evidence displays the difference without proving whether the phrase was added or omitted.

Rapid Phrase Comparisons

- John 7:8 - “I go not” or “I go not yet”
- Colossians 1:14 - “through his blood” present or absent
- Romans 8:1 - the qualifying clause present in full, in part, or absent
- Controlling questions:
 - Is the form without these words merely another translation of the form containing them?
- Necessary conclusion:
 - No; the content differs before English style is considered.

Anchor Two: Acts 8:37

Acts 8:36-38 - King James Version

SCRIPTURE

36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

- Compare three reader experiences.
 - Verse 37 in the main text
 - Verse 37 in brackets or a footnote
 - Numbering that moves directly from verse 36 to verse 38
- The verse contains Philip's condition and the eunuch's confession before baptism.
- A form containing those statements and a running text lacking them do not contain identical narrative information.
- The doctrine's appearance elsewhere does not identify the text of Acts 8.
- A footnote acknowledges an alternative without making it function as the reader's main text.

Rapid Verse Comparisons

- John 5:4 - the angel troubling the water
- First John 5:7-8 - the heavenly witnesses

Anchor Three: Mark 16:9-20

- Compare the actual treatment in the selected editions.
 - KJV: unqualified main text
 - NKJV: unbracketed text with a textual note
 - NIV: unbracketed text preceded by a bracketed status notice
 - ESV and NASB20: double brackets
 - CSB: single brackets
- Controlling questions:
 - Is the passage in the running text?
 - Is it bracketed?
 - Is there a note?
 - Does another ending appear?
 - Where does the reader perceive Mark to end?
- Twelve verses include resurrection appearances, commission language, signs, and the ascension.
- The session does not adjudicate the original ending.
- It establishes that the editorial treatments are not functionally identical for an ordinary reader.

The Category Establishes a Defined Kind of Difference

- A text containing material and a text not containing it cannot both reproduce the same verbal content at that point.
- Add the limit immediately:
 - That conclusion identifies the problem; it does not identify the original reading.
- The issue is not always more or fewer words; sometimes both forms contain words, but not the same words.

Notes

Category Three: Different Underlying Words

THESIS

When English editions represent materially different underlying words, both readings may be studied and defended, but they cannot be treated as identical textual information.

Different Underlying Words Change Identified Information

PERSON · ACTION · OBJECT · DESCRIPTION · RELATIONSHIP

- These examples can be less visually obvious than absent verses because neither edition appears incomplete.
- The test is not whether both readings can be placed inside an orthodox system.
- The test is what each reading expressly states at this point.

Anchor One: John 1:18

John 1:18 - King James Version

SCRIPTURE

18 No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

- Compare “only begotten Son” with forms such as “only begotten God” or “the one and only Son, who is himself God.”
- Both readings contain a substantive title.
- Son and God are not English synonyms, and different Greek readings underlie the contrast.
- The reading changes the explicit description supplied at this point.

Anchor Two: First Timothy 3:16

1 Timothy 3:16 - King James Version

SCRIPTURE

16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

- Compare “God was manifest in the flesh” with “He who was manifested in the flesh.”
- One form explicitly names God as the grammatical subject.
- The other uses a relative or personal expression whose antecedent must be supplied or understood.
- Both may be incorporated into orthodox theology, but they do not identify the subject in the same manner.
- The narrower question is what wording belongs here.

Anchor Three: Revelation 22:14

Revelation 22:14 - King James Version

SCRIPTURE

14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

- Compare “do his commandments” with “wash their robes.”
- Both forms are grammatically complete.
- They assign different actions to those pronounced blessed.
- This is not a formal-versus-dynamic translation of one identical phrase.
- The question of the correct reading remains open within this session, but equivalence cannot simply be asserted.

Rapid Comparisons Show Several Kinds of Changed Information

- Mark 1:2 - “the prophets” or “Isaiah the prophet”
- Luke 2:14 - “good will toward men” or peace among those pleasing to God
- Ephesians 3:9 - “fellowship” or “administration” of the mystery
- Romans 14:10 - judgment seat of Christ or of God
- Second Thessalonians 2:2 - day of Christ or day of the Lord
- Acts 20:28 belongs in the editorial category because the selected editions share “church of God” in the main text while some notes disclose “Lord.”

Doctrinal Survival Does Not Identify the Wording Here

- Does a doctrine survive elsewhere?
 - This is a legitimate systematic-theology question.
- Which wording is Scripture here?
 - This is the doctrine-of-Scripture question governing the session.
- An answer to the first does not supply an answer to the second.
- Materially different words cannot be treated as though they communicate identical textual information.

Notes

Category Four: Texts, Margins, and the Reader's Bible

THESIS

Where an edition places a reading changes what ordinary readers receive as Scripture, and historical witnesses confirm that textual, translational, and marginal decisions have been understood to carry doctrinal consequences.

Five Editorial Statuses Shape the Reader's Bible

- Main text
- Main text with a note
- Brackets
- Margin or footnote
- Not visible
- Editorial placement raises practical questions:
 - Which wording will be read aloud?
 - Which wording will be memorized?
 - Which wording will be preached by a reader who does not consult notes?
 - Does disclosure of an alternative make both wordings the reader's text?
- A note is valuable evidence, but textual acknowledgment and textual identity are not the same claim.

George Vance Smith Witnessed Doctrinal Consequences

- He served on the New Testament Revision Company.
- He was a Unitarian scholar.
- His theology shaped his judgments and must be disclosed.
- He favored several changes in the Revised Version.
- He published specifically about revised texts and margins he believed affected doctrine.
- He discussed passages such as First John 5:7-8, John 1:18, Acts 20:28, Romans 9:5, and First Timothy 3:16.
- The session does not adopt Smith's exegesis, Unitarian theology, or textual conclusions.
- His testimony establishes that a participant in the Revision could regard textual, translational, and marginal decisions as doctrinally meaningful.

Editorial Disclosure Does Not Eliminate the Textual Decision

- A reading printed as Scripture and an alternative disclosed as a possibility do not function identically for the ordinary reader.
- The margin may reveal that a decision exists.
- It does not eliminate the need to decide which wording belongs to the text.

Notes

The Cumulative Evidence Exceeds Isolated Stylistic Difference

THESIS

The cumulative pattern demonstrates that English-Bible differences recur across translation, amount of content, underlying wording, and editorial status rather than being reducible to isolated stylistic preferences.

Three Evidence Walls Show the Cumulative Pattern

- Interpretive translation wall
 - Show six to eight references with compact rendering labels.
- Presence-or-absence wall
 - Show ten to twelve references grouped by word, phrase, verse, and passage.
- Different-words wall
 - Show ten to twelve references grouped by person, action, description, and relationship.
- Let each wall remain visible without explanation.

The Shared Label Cannot Explain the Cumulative Evidence

- Is “They are all Bibles” an adequate explanation of what the evidence displays?
- Preserve the final two minutes for the formal limit and conclusion.

Notes

Non-Equivalence Makes a Textual Decision Unavoidable

THESIS

English Bibles do not always communicate equivalent information at the same point, so the shared label Bible cannot by itself identify the inspired wording and the textual question must be faced honestly.

The Evidence Has Defined Limits

- It does not prove that the longest reading is always correct.
- It does not prove that the shortest reading is always correct.
- It does not prove that every alternative destroys a Christian doctrine.
- It does not prove a preferred textual tradition passage by passage.
- It does not establish direction merely by showing presence and absence.

The Evidence Makes a Textual Decision Unavoidable

- Some English differences are legitimate interpretive translation.
- Some editions contain material absent from others.
- Some editions represent different underlying people, actions, descriptions, or relationships.
- Main text, brackets, margins, and invisible alternatives do not function identically for ordinary readers.
- Therefore:
 - English Bibles do not always communicate equivalent information at the same point.
 - The shared label Bible cannot by itself identify the inspired wording.
 - The session has not solved the textual question; it has established that there is a textual question.

The Textus Receptus Position Is a Further Conclusion

- My own conclusion is that the preserved New Testament is represented by the Textus Receptus. I have not attempted to prove that conclusion in this session. Today's evidence establishes the prior point: competing readings are not always equivalent, so the textual question must be faced rather than dismissed.
- ¹ The comparisons demonstrate non-equivalence and the necessity of a textual decision.
 - ² The Textus Receptus position is a stated conclusion, not a position fully proved by this session.

The Unit I Questions Remain Controlling

- Which books are Scripture?
- Which words constitute those books?
- When do different English expressions faithfully communicate those words?
- 15.

Notes

What This Session Established

- A shared cover title does not establish textual equivalence.
- Some English differences are interpretive translations of the same underlying wording.
- Presence or absence and materially different underlying words are not merely stylistic variation.
- Main text, brackets, margins, footnotes, and invisible alternatives do not function identically.
- The evidence establishes the necessity of a textual decision without adjudicating every reading.

SESSION CONCLUSION

English Bibles do not always communicate equivalent information at the same point. Visible differences must therefore be classified as interpretive translation, presence or absence, different underlying words, or editorial presentation before the textual question can be addressed honestly.

What This Session Did Not Establish

- The longest or shortest reading is always correct.
- Every variation destroys a Christian doctrine.
- A complete defense of the Textus Receptus or another textual tradition.

