

Choosing Bible Versions

“A way to improve your Bible reading”

What we are going to cover ...

- ▶ Quick Definition of Terms
- ▶ Path to Today's Modern Translations
 - ▶ Description of Extant Manuscripts
 - ▶ Manuscripts → Critical Ed. → Translation
 - ▶ Different Path for the KJV / NKJV
- ▶ English Translations Overview
 - ▶ Types of Translations

- ▶ How they are defined
- ▶ What their goals are
- ▶ List 12 Most Popular Translations
- ▶ Picking Your Versions
 - ▶ Why More than one Favorite.
 - ▶ Where to Look
 - ▶ What to Look at and Consider
 - ▶ You do **NOT** Have to Buy!

Some Quick Definitions of terms (cont.) ...

▶ Manuscripts

- ▶ Copies of biblical texts

▶ Ancient Translations

- ▶ “Other” language translations

▶ Internal Evidence

- ▶ Content and context of the text itself

▶ External Evidence

- ▶ Data outside the text itself

Some Quick Definitions of terms ...

▶ *Church Fathers' Writings*

- ▶ Quotations, commentary, and paraphrases

▶ *Archaeological Discoveries*

- ▶ Oxyrhynchus Egypt - ancient garbage dump

▶ *Non-biblical inscriptions and artifacts*

- ▶ Ancient synagogue inscriptions

▶ *Other Ancient Texts and Histories*

- ▶ Refs to biblical events, people, or ideas

Some Quick Definitions of terms (cont.)...

▶ Biblical Textual Criticism

- ▶ Scholarly study of differences in biblical manuscripts to reconstruct the nearest wording of the original texts.
- ▶ Not unique to Biblical world.
- ▶ NT Textual Criticism Vast number of Ms.
- ▶ NT / OT Textual Criticism differ.

Some Quick Definitions of terms (cont.)...

▶ *Critical Edition*

- ▶ Original language version of a biblical text produced by Textual Criticism.
 - ▶ Apparatus - explanations of variants
 - ▶ *New Testament (Greek)*:
 - ▶ NA28 - Nestle Aland 28th ed.
 - ▶ UBS5 - United Bible Society 5th ed.
 - ▶ *Old Testament (Hebrew)*:
 - ▶ BHS, BHQ, HBCE, and HUBP

Biblical Manuscript Breakdown

Greek: Between 5,800 and 6,000

Latin: About 10,000

Translations: 9,000 to 18,000

Total: 23,000 to 25,000

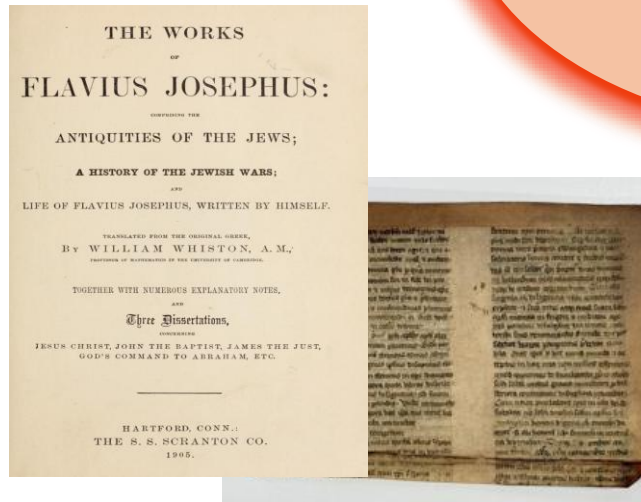
<u>AUTHOR</u>	<u>When Written</u>	<u>Earliest Copy</u>	<u>Time Span</u>	<u>No. of Copies</u>
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	A.D. 900	1000 yrs.	10
Livy	59 B.C.-A.D.17			20
Plato (Tetralogies)	427-347 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200 yrs.	7
Tacitus (Annals of Rome)	A.D. 100	A.D. 1100	1000 yrs.	20
Pliny the Younger (History)	A.D. 61-113	A.D. 850	750 yrs.	7
Thucydides (History)	460-400 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs.	8
Suetonius (De Vita Caesarum)	A.D. 75-160	A.D. 950	800 yrs.	8
Herodotus (History)	480-425 B.C.	A.D. 900	1300 yrs.	8
Sophocles	496-406 B.C.	A.D. 1000	1400 yrs.	193
Catullus	54 B.C.	A.D. 1500	1600 yrs.	3
Euripides	480-406 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1500 yrs.	9
Demosthenes	383-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1300 yrs.	200+
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1400 yrs.	49*
Aristophanes	450-385 B.C.	A.D. 900	1200 yrs.	10
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500 yrs.	643
New Testament	A.D.50-100	A.D. 125	25yrs.	over 24,000
+ all from one copy.				
* of any one work.	Chart origin - F.F. Bruce and others			

Path to Today's Modern Translations (1)

Principles of Textual Criticism



NT Ms. (~24000)
5800 in Greek



External Evidence

Textual
Critics
OT/NT

2

Critical Editions

NEW TESTAMENT

- Nestle Aland
 - (NA28)
- United Bible Society
 - (UBS 5)

OLD TESTAMENT

- BHS, BHQ, HBCE,
- and HUBP

**Bible
Translators**

Target = English ...

2

3

Translations

- From the beginning:
 - Approximately 450 to 900
- Between 1900 and 2025
 - 40 to 50 Complete Bibles

Types

- Formal Equivalence
- Medium Equivalence
- Functional Equivalence

Path to KJV Translation

OT

- Hebrew Scribes

OT - Masoretic Text

- Septuagint
- Latin Vulgate
- Targums

NT

- Erasmus
- 6 to 8 Ms
- Others 15

NT - Textus Receptus

- Stephanus
- Beza & beyond

Bible Translators (47-54 Scholars)

KJV Versions

1611 Original
1762 Cambridge
1769 Oxford

Manuscripts

Critical Edition

Basis - KJV / NKJV

Path to NKJV Translation

Critical Editions

OT - Masoretic Text
NT - Textus Receptus

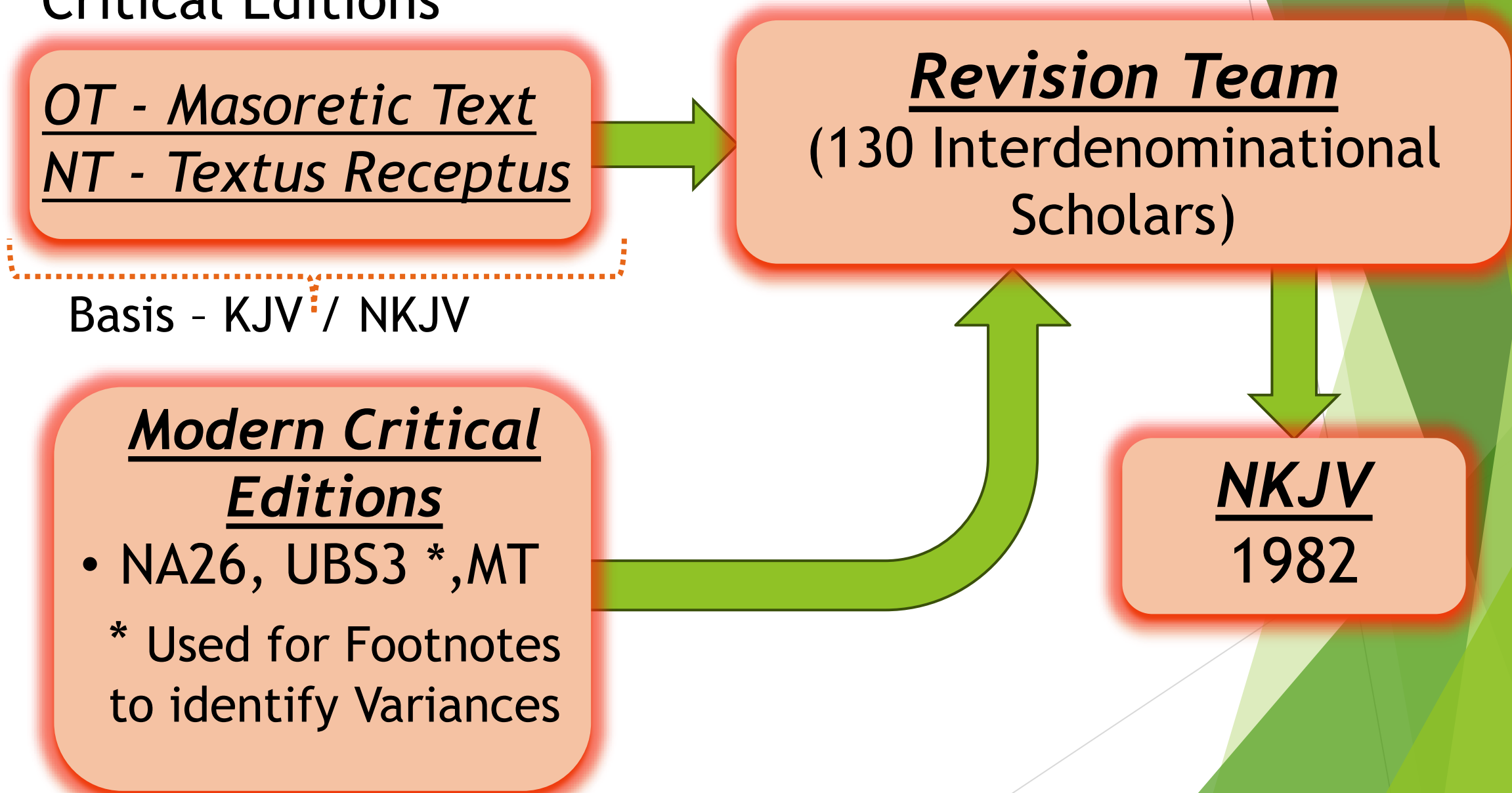
Basis - KJV / NKJV

Modern Critical Editions

- NA26, UBS3 *, MT
- * Used for Footnotes to identify Variances

Revision Team
(130 Interdenominational Scholars)

NKJV
1982



Top Selling Versions in 2024-2025

Perplexity

1. New International Version (NIV)
2. English Standard Version (ESV)
3. King James Version (KJV)
4. New Living Translation (NLT)
5. New King James Version (NKJV)
6. Christian Standard Bible (CSB)
7. New International Reader's Version (NIrV)
8. New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
9. New American Standard Bible (NASB)
10. The Message (MSG)

Top Selling Versions in 2024-2025

Claude

1. King James Version (KJV)
2. New International Version (NIV)
3. English Standard Version (ESV)
4. New Living Translation (NLT)
5. Christian Standard Bible (CSB)
6. The Message (MSG)
7. New American Standard Bible (NASB)
8. Common English Bible (CEB)
9. Amplified Bible (AMP)
10. New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Top Selling Versions in 2024-2025

*ChatGPT **

1. New International Version (NIV)
2. King James Version (KJV)
3. English Standard Version (ESV)
4. New Living Translation (NLT)
5. Christian Standard Bible (CSB)
6. New King James Version (NKJV)
7. New American Standard Bible (NASB)
8. New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
9. New International Reader's Version (NIrV)
10. The Message (MSG)

Three Basic Types of Translations ...

▶ Formal Equivalence

- ▶ AKA - literal or Word-for-Word *
- ▶ Closest in meaning to the Source Language
- ▶ Closest in grammar and syntax to the Source Language
- ▶ Sometimes “wooden” in style.
- ▶ **Examples:** ESV / NASB 2020

* Word-for-word translations are NOT POSSIBLE in any language.

▶ Functional Equivalence

- ▶ AKA - Dynamic equivalence
- ▶ Most readable
- ▶ May be defined in some cases as a Paraphrase
- ▶ Vary widely in the liberties taken
- ▶ May have more theological biases
- ▶ **Examples:** NLT / AMP / MSG

Three Basic Types of Translations (cont.) ...

▶ Medium Equivalence

- ▶ Middle ground
- ▶ More readable than formal
- ▶ May miss some nuances of the SL text
- ▶ Still very accurate
- ▶ **Examples:** NIV / CSB

12 Top Selling Versions in 2024-2025 by Type

King James Version	(KJV)	Formal
English Standard Version	(ESV)	Formal
New King James Version	(NKJV)	Formal
New American Standard	(NASB)	Formal
New International Version	(NIV)	Medium
Christian Standard Bible	(CSB)	Medium
New Revised Standard Version	(NRSV)	Medium
Common English Bible	(CEB)	Medium
New Living Translation	(NLT)	Functional
New International Reader's Version	(NIrV)	Functional
The Message	(MSG)	Functional
Amplified Bible	(AMP)	Functional

▶ *Why have multiple versions?*

- ▶ Promotes better understanding
 - ▶ Formal by itself may be hard to read
 - ▶ Medium and Functional
 - ▶ Easier to read
 - ▶ May miss important details and nuances
- ▶ In difficult passages - helpful to use side-by-side
- ▶ Helps spot theological biases

► *Deciding on the types*

- What do you currently use?
- Where does it fit? - formal/med/functional
- Don't give it up - Update it instead!
 - New understandings of language and syntax
 - New techniques of Textual Criticism (CBGM/ECM)
 - New manuscript discoveries -Search is Still ON!!
 - New Features

▶ *Suggestions:*

- ▶ Add to what you currently have.
 - ▶ Minimum - 1 Formal and 1 Medium
 - ▶ A Functional - nice as a third version
 - ▶ The more the merrier! (to a point)
 - ▶ Consider a Study Bible.

▶ What to READ

▶ Preface and Forward

- ▶ Looking for biases
- ▶ Check out the publishers
- ▶ Check out the translators / writers

▶ Where to READ

- ▶ On Amazon, Kindle versions “look inside.”
 - ▶ Publisher’s websites
 - ▶ Free online editions.
- ▶ Other - consider AI searches with questions

Evaluating Versions - READ Before You Buy! (cont.) ...

▶ Passages

▶ Favorite passages

- ▶ How do they sound?

- ▶ Are they clear to you?

▶ Difficult passages

- ▶ Are they clearer and more understandable?

- ▶ Could you read them aloud with confidence?

Conclusions and Takeaways ...

▶ Appendix 1

- ▶ Lists of top Sellers

▶ Appendix 2

- ▶ Equivalence Spectrum - 30 Versions

▶ Appendix 3

- ▶ 37 Example Versions

▶ Appendix 4

- ▶ Detailed Statistics - 12 Most Popular versions

▶ Appendix 5

- ▶ Free Sites for Reading Bibles

Conclusions and Takeaways ...

► Bible Software:

- Allow good searches.
- Usually provide side by side Bible reading.
- Many features.
- Many commentaries built in.
- Several good packages (top 5).
 - Logos
 - Accordance Bible Software
 - Olive
 - e-Sword (free)
 - Blue Letter Bible (free)

Conclusions and Takeaways ...

► Logos

► Free Edition

- 5 Bibles - ESV, KJV, CSB, ASV, Lexham English Bible
- Added Bibles = \$10 ea.

► Subscriptions:

- Premium = \$70 / yr (\$ 5.83 / mn)
- Pro = \$130 / yr (\$10.83 / mn)
- MAX (all features) = \$170 / yr (\$14.17 / mn)
 - Billed Annually

Conclusions and Takeaways ...

► Suggested readings:

► How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth

Gordon D. Fee

► New Testament Textual Criticism

David Alan Black

► Textual Criticism of the Bible

Paul D. Wegner

THE END