

## THE LANGUAGE OF THE BIBLE

The most famous English translation of the Bible is the King James Version, which was published exactly 350 years before the New English Bible published in 1961.

Do you have a favourite version? Many bibles in current use include: the New International Version; The Good News Bible and The New Jerusalem Bible.

Older versions of the bible include the first one translated from Greek and Latin by John Wyclif. He lived in the fourteenth century and died in 1384. Some versions of the bible will differ over the centuries owing to the nature of historical changes: 'Thy' and 'Thou' being examples of the use of the second person pronoun; some spellings such as 'sonne' for 'son', 'feeld' for 'field'.

Other changes will result from the way the text has been interpreted or transcribed. Languages like the ancient Greek have many words and/or derivatives for the same word, for example, the word 'agape' can be translated as a patient kind of suffering love, but there are five different words for love in ancient Greek.

The emphasis which a writer puts on a particular interpretation has an effect on the passages we read today as there may be a particular nuance or exegesis which is intended. The following example illustrates some minor differences between three versions of the same text:

**Now the elder son was out on the farm** (New English Bible);  
Now his elder sonne was in the field (King James Version);  
*Forsoth his eldere sone was in feeld* (Wyclif).

The New English Bible has the elder son '**on the farm**'. The two older versions have him '*in the field*'. This change is the result of an interpretation rather than the change in meaning over the years. A farm suggests domesticity and ownership of a business, 'a field' implies a grassy open space.

Can you find any words which follow this practise? List six examples which reflect this interpretation.

Remember there are many hundreds of years which intervene in the ensuing years between Wycliffe's Version and the King James Version.

Here are some other words which deserve further investigation:  
King James Version

Intreated – begged;  
Transgressed – disobeyed;  
Meete – right and proper.