

History of the Received Text

Easter and Other Polysemic Translations
Study Pak 11A

Dr. Phil Stringer

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"Another thing we think good to admonish thee of (gentle Reader) that we have not tied ourselves _____, or to an identity of words, as some peradventure would wish that we had done, because they observe, that some learned men somewhere, have been as exact as they could that way. Truly, that we might not vary from the sense of that which we had translated before, if the word signified that same in both places (for there be some words that be not the same sense everywhere) we were especially careful, and made a conscience, according to our duty. But, that we should express the same notion in the same particular word; as for example, if we translate the Hebrew or Greek word once by purpose, never to call it intent; if one where journeying, never traveling; if one where think, never suppose; if one where pain, never ache; if one where joy, never gladness, etc. Thus to mince the matter, we thought to savour more of curiosity than wisdom, and that rather it would breed scorn in the Atheist than bring profit to the godly Reader."

~~ King James Translators from the Preface to the King James Bible ~~

"Thus we see that _____ which we had the Spirit - filled translators of our Bible to correctly translate `pascha' as 'Easter.' It most certainly did not refer to the Jewish Passover. In fact, to change it to `passover' would confuse the reader and make the truth of the situation unclear."

~~ Dr. Samuel Gipp ~~

"The capacity of a word to have two or more different meanings is technically known as polysemy."

~~ David Black, *Linguistics for Students of New Testament Greek*, pp. 124-125 ~~

I. EASTER

One of the most consistent attacks on the King James Bible is that the use of the word Easter in Acts 12:4 _____,

"Perhaps there was never a more unhappy, not to say absurd translation than that in our text."

~~ Adam Clarke on Acts 12:4 ~~

"The word Easter should be Passover."

~~ J. V. McGee on Acts 12:4 ~~

"Acts 12:4 in the KJV says Herod was planning 'after Easter' to bring Peter out. The KJV translates this same Greek word as 'Passover' 28 times. This is the only time they

translate this Greek word as 'Easter.' _____
_____ or they _____. The NASB translates this Greek word as Passover all 29 times.”
~~ Robert Joyner, *King James Only*, p. 14 ~~

"The word that the KJV translates as 'Easter' appears 29 times in the New Testament. In each of the other 28 instances the KJV translates the phrase as 'the passover.' For example, in John 19:14, 'And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold the King!' And there is no reason for confusion as to what Luke is referring to here, for the preceding verse said, 'Then were the days of unleavened bread.' The days of unleavened bread, of course, were connected with the Passover celebration. Yet in this one place the AV contains the anachronistic term 'Easter.' Luke's reference to the days of 'unleavened bread' makes it clear that he is referring to the Jewish holiday season, not to some pagan festival that did not become known by the specific term 'Easter' for some time to come."

~~ James White, *The King James Only Controversy*, p. 233 ~~

"Some consider the utilization of 'Easter' in place of passover in Acts 12:4 in the KJV to be an implementation of dynamic equivalency."

~~ Calvin George, *The Battle for the Spanish Bible*, p. 83 ~~

"The word Easter is a mistranslation - it should be the passover."

~~ John R. Rice, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 272 ~~

II. THE PRINCIPLE OF POLYSEMY

- A. Many words or phrases have more than one possible meaning. This is called _____. The proper meaning is determined by “_____” - the way words are used in a given situation. In the dictionary several possible translations for a polysemic word will be listed. The most common translation will _____, then the second most common and .so forth. Context will often rule out many translations or definitions that are linguistically possible.
- B. Hebrew, Greek, and English are polysemic languages. Polysemic languages are often humorous to people with non-polysemic languages (see Russian comedian Yakov Smirnov's comedy skit "the door is ajar").

III. POLYSEMY AND THE BIBLE

There are many places in the Bible where the principle of polysemy and context play an extremely important role in _____ and/or _____.

- A. In Isaiah 7:14, _____ is one linguistically possible translation for the Hebrew word Almah. Another is _____. Context requires the use of the word virgin. This is confirmed by the Greek

quotation of Isa. 7:14 in Matt. 1:23. Virgin is the only possible translation for the Greek word "parthenos" used in Matthew 1:23.

- B. The King James translators use the word virtue in Mark 5:30; Luke 6:19, 8:46. Most modern translations use the word "power." Either is possible linguistically but the context demands "virtue." There was more than just the power of a magician involved.
- C. The Hebrew word Elohim (or its Aramaic equivalent) can mean _____, gods, or judges. As a result, it is translated God when it refers to _____ (Gen. 1:1) or gods when it refers to the _____ (many times in the Old Testament). Context dictates what the proper translation is. In Psalm 136:2, it is translated two different ways in the same phrase - context demands it. In Exodus 22:28, the word gods clearly refers to human judges (people who tend to think that they are gods).

In Daniel 3:25, one of several translations is linguistically possible: a son of the gods, or a son of God, or the Son of God, or the son of the gods. Context demands that it be the Son of God - or Daniel 3 becomes a nonsense passage (see v. 28).

IV. POLYSEMY AND BIAS

It is in dealing with polysemic words that the personal and theological bias of translators and interpreters becomes very clear. If you don't believe in the virgin birth, it is very tempting to use the term "young woman" in Isa. 7:14, even though context demands otherwise. If you don't believe in the Deity of Christ, it is very tempting to translate Daniel 3:25 "a son of the gods" - even though context demands otherwise.

If you are gripped by a prejudice against the King James Bible, you are tempted to pick any translation that is linguistically possible just as long as it is different from the King James Bible. A graphic example is Hosea 3:1.

The Hebrew phrase "flagons of wine" could also be translated "cakes of raisins." This is linguistically possible but is a nonsense translation.

God condemns Israel for drunkenness in chapter 1, 2, 4, 5 of Hosea. He is clearly doing the same in Hosea 3:1! But an anti - KJB bias makes some people willing to grasp at any possible translation as long as it is different from the KJB.

So the RSV reads "_____",
the CTV reads "and enjoy cakes with fruit." The New American Standard Version reads "and love raisin cakes," the New World Translation reads, "loving raisin cakes" and the MV "and love the sacred raisin cakes." That's right, these modern translations have God condemning Israel for liking raisins. Anything to keep from agreeing with the KJB.

The Living Bible ignores the Hebrew words completely and uses the phrase "turned to other gods and offered them choice gifts." The New King James tries to get out of this amazing mess by adding words: "and love the raisin cakes of the pagans." They admit they added the words "of the pagans" by putting them in italics. The New English Bible reads "and loves raisin cakes offered to idols." No reader of the NEB could tell that the last three words were added to the text. Some are so biased against the KJB that they will believe anything that doesn't match the KJB.

The King James translators referred to flagons of wine because _____
_____.

V. EASTER AND POLYSEMY

In the New Testament times, the Greek word "pascha [or pasche]" is used to refer to _____. So are its Hebrew and Aramaic equivalents.

Its most common usage in Greek literature was in reference to the _____. This feast was later adopted by the Roman Catholics and the name changed to Easter. The pagan festival of Ishtar had been around for centuries before Rome tried to "Christianize" it. "Easter is nothing else than Astarte, one of the titles of Beltis, the queen of heaven" (Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, p. 103).

The second most common usage was in reference to _____. The third most common usage referred to a pagan holiday feast in the fall.

The fourth most common usage referred to a pagan feast in December (later adopted by the Roman Catholics as Christmas). Each time the word was used, the _____ determined which holiday feast it referred to.

According to the New Oxford English Dictionary, the word paschal: (1) relates to Easter, and (2) relates to the Jewish Passover.

According to Webster's Dictionary, the word Easter originally referred to a _____ almost coincident in the date with the Passover Festival.

The Roman Catholic Church tried to merge the pagan holiday of Ishtar with the Jewish Passover to create a new Christian holiday - Easter. This created confusion in the mind of many in the Christian world.

The word pascha is used 29 times in the New Testament. In most early English Bibles, it is translated Easter every time. This was consistent with Catholic usage. Easter is the most common definition of the word in Greek literature.

However, the King James translators did not follow this policy (as they mention on page 11 of their preface).

In _____ cases the context demands the translation, Passover. The Jewish holiday is clearly in view. They rejected the Catholic policy of always translating the word pascha as Easter. Recognizing the principle of polysemy they turned to the second most common definition of the word pasche - passover.

However, in one place they retained the word Easter because the Jewish Passover _____.

The holiday referred to clearly takes place during or after the feast of the unleavened bread, Acts 12:3-4. The days of unleavened bread take place for the first seven days after the Passover - see Exodus 12; Ezra 6:19-22; 2 Chron. 30:15-21; Deut. 16:1-3; Num. 28:16-17; Lev. 23:5-6; Joshua 5:10-11.

This holiday feast took place after the Passover - to call it the Passover would _____.

The word pascha could not refer to the holiday feasts in September or December but this "pascha" _____ which took place in April. Practicing the principle of polysemy, considering the immediate context of Acts 12 and the whole context of Scripture, the KJB translators knew exactly which word to pick. Only the _____. Ishtar was celebrated in the spring. They chose the word Easter precisely because Easter is the only possible correct word here. They used Easter because it was the pagan Easter feast in view.

Their scholarship far outshines the scholarship of their critics.

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