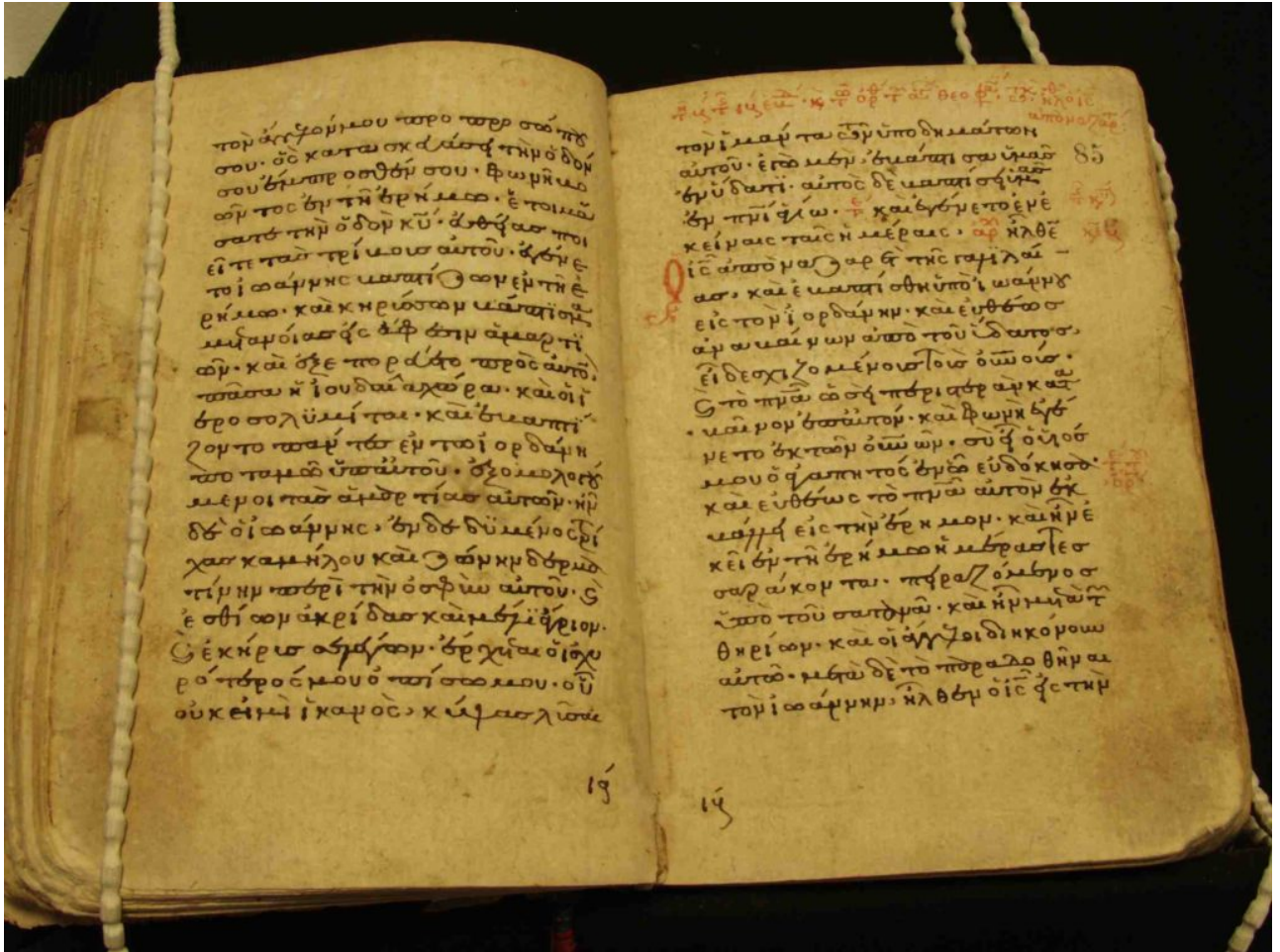


Does a person need to know Biblical Greek to understand the New Testament, or is using multiple Bible translations



Greek manuscript of the New Testament. Is using multiple Bible translations better than knowing Biblical Greek?

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“Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding”—Proverbs 4:7 NIV

“By studying Biblical Greek, you can gain a deeper understanding of the original text and the cultural context in which it was written”—Quora, February 6, 2023

Some Bible teachers and preachers are big on the idea that knowing Biblical Greek (Koine) is important, even vital, in getting the best understanding of the Bible. While this may have a lot to do with their ego, we must grant that some are very sincere in holding and promoting this belief. It is certainly fine for anyone who has the inclination, the time, the resources, and the opportunity, to do so, that is, to learn Biblical Greek. It is a good thing that some have become scholars in Biblical Greek, and have been active in Bible translation and have written Biblical commentaries. But it takes many years of intensive study to become proficient in Biblical Greek.

“Consider your own calling, brothers. Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth”—1 Corinthians 1:26 NAB

“Observing the boldness of Peter and John, and perceiving them to be uneducated and ordinary men”—Acts 4:13 NAB

The fact is that the vast majority of Christians do not have the time, resources or inclination to learn Biblical Greek. Even more importantly, God doesn't require such a thing from those who serve him. The Bible is for everyone.

“You pore over the scriptures, believing that in them you can find eternal life; it is these scriptures that testify to me, and yet, you refuse to come to me to receive life . . . I know you too well; you have no love of God in you”—John 5:39,40,42

NJB. Knowing Biblical Hebrew and Greek didn't help these eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ to understand the scriptures, or, more importantly, to love God.

“While the Jews demand miracles and the Greeks look for wisdom, we are preaching a crucified Christ, to the Jews an obstacle they cannot get over, to the gentiles foolishness”—1 Corinthians 1:22,23 NJB. Reading and speaking Biblical Hebrew and Greek is obviously not the key to understanding the scriptures. One modern example of this truth is the popular New Testament scholar Bart Ehrman, who is an agnostic. He knows knows Biblical Greek, but he's not even sure that God exists!

Often, the New Testament writers quoted from the Greek Septuagint Version (LXX) rather than the Hebrew text of the Old Testament (**Psalm 40:6 - Hebrews 10:5,6; Genesis 12:3 - Galatians 3:8**), because the Greek Version was more widely available, and Koine' Greek was the international language of communication at that time.

We read Jesus' words only in translation, because he spoke Hebrew (some say Aramaic), but the New Testament writers recorded them in Greek. Obviously, then, reading the words of Jesus in the language that he actually spoke in is not only not important — it is impossible!

No translation from one language to another is exact. This is one reason we have various renderings in different Bible translations of the same Koine' Greek words and phrases. Within some Bible translations there are alternate renderings given in the footnotes, which are usually considered to be of virtually equal authenticity. There are also some variations of the

Greek New Testament text due to some minor differences among the extant ancient Greek New Testament manuscripts. And then there are differences in the way the New Testament writers quoted the same scripture from the Hebrew or the LXX. Some of these are also noted in the footnotes of some translations.

There are Greek Interlinear Texts available, with the Biblical Greek text and the literal English (or other language) text immediately below it. These can be very helpful in one's understanding.

The internet and local libraries are sources available for many people to check various translations of the Bible. There are available for purchase on the internet and local bookstores many different translations of the Bible, especially the New Testament. From the Bible it is obvious that God wants people of 'every language' ("**people of all nations**" [**Matthew 28:19 NAB**]) to serve him, hence the need for translations into many languages.

"With your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation"—Revelation 5:9 NIV

What is the best Bible translation? There is not one that could be called the best in every respect. There are many pros and cons, including biases, about every translation. It is not our job to dictate to others which Bible translation to use ("**we do not dominate over your faith**" [**2 Corinthians 1:24 Hart**]). We can, however, mention some that we think are very good English ones.

For overall accuracy and readability, the top four, we think, are probably:

1. ***The New Testament, by David Bentley Hart, 2nd edition, 2023***
2. ***The New American Bible, revised edition (NAB, or NABRE)***
- 3.. ***The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)***

4. Literal Standard Version (LSV)

Other overall very good translations are, for various reasons:

An American Translation, by Edgar Goodspeed (AAT)

New International Version (NIV)

New American Standard Version (NASB, 2012)

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Revised English Bible (REB)

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

English Standard Version (ESV)

God's Word Translation (GWT)

New Living Translation (NLT)

Using these and other translations can help someone who is not proficient in Biblical Greek to get the sense of it, in its various nuances, and thus possibly be in as good or even better position than one who knows Biblical Greek as far as understanding what the Bible, especially the New Testament, texts mean.

Also, see the article, "Jesus' Robe at Herod's Trial – Using Various Translations," on this website.