

**Q** Was the ‘original’ New Testament written strictly in the Greek language? The Latin-speaking Roman Empire had already conquered the Greek Empire hundreds of years earlier before Christ (275 B.C. and 148 B.C.)?

**A** Linguists know that it was not a Greek-speaking world. Consequently, the New Testament would not have been written solely in Greek. “The [Roman] emperor Claudius tried to limit the use of Greek, and on occasion revoked the citizenship of those who lacked Latin.” (Wikipedia, Languages of the Roman Empire). One language is not better than the other. Each speaks to the culture of its audience. God promised that he would speak to people in other languages. He said, “With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak...saith the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:21, Isa. 28:11, 13, 14). This promise was fulfilled in Acts 2:4, 5 when, “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Thus “devout men, out of every nation under heaven” proclaimed, “hear we every man in our own tongue.” As recorded in the rest of the book of Acts, those who received these languages soon “preached the gospel” in these languages “with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven” (Acts 2:4-11, 1 Peter 1:12, 25). We read, “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness” and “the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word...For they heard them speak with tongues...” (Acts 4:31, 10:44, 46).

Christians have historically believed that God gave his inspired word “to all nations.” Scholars, such as Herman Hoskier, have long demonstrated that the originals were not written in Greek only. In the 1500s John Foxe records a statement from what he called “a certain

old treatise, found in a certain ancient English book.” This “ancient” book said,

“Also the four evangelists wrote the gospels in **divers languages**, as Matthew in Judea, Mark in Italy, Luke in Achaia, and John in Asia. And all these wrote in the **languages** of the same countries... since Christ commanded his apostles to preach his gospel unto all the world, and excepted no people or **language**” (John Foxe, *The Acts and Monuments*, 1583, Stephen Cattley, ed., republished at London: R.B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 8 volumes, 1837, vol. 4, pp. 671, 675).

The Prologue before the book of Matthew in an edition of the Bishops' Bible said,

“Matthew, who also was called Leui, being of a Publican made an Apostle, did first in Iurie [Jewry] write the Gospel of Christ in the Hebrew tongue for their sakes which beleueed of the circumcision. It is uncertaine who afterwards did translate it into the Greeke tongue. Howbeit the copy of the Hebrew is kept vnto this day in the library of Cesarea, which library one Pamphilus Martyr did gather together most diligently. And the Nazarenes, which in Berea a city of Syria, did vse the same booke, gaue vs leaue to copie it out” (J.R. Dore, *Old Bibles: An Account of the Early Versions of the English Bible*, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1888, 2nd edition, p. 285).

“God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation” “the Holy Ghost” gave “the word” in the “tongues” of the people (Acts 10:14, 15, 34-37, 44-47). Acts 10 demonstrates God's acceptance of “com-

mon" men (i.e. Italian) who speak the vernacular (common) language of "another nation." Paul, who penned much of the New Testament, logically said that he spoke "with tongues more than ye all" (1 Cor. 14:18; Rom. 15:24). His letter to the Galatians, who spoke Celtic, and to the Romans, who spoke Latin, would of necessity be written by him in those languages also. History professor Kenneth W. Harl (Yale Ph.D.) reminds us that it was **not a Greek-speaking world** when the New Testament was written. The Roman Empire had carried their Latin language across the empire. The barbarians and non-urban provinces often retained their native languages, just as they had during their conquest by the Greeks. Scriptures in Berber, Iberian, Celtiberian, Iranian, Sythian, Basque, Ligurian, Cantabrian, Parthian, Angli, Saxon, Gothic, as well as many other languages and dialects, would have been needed to "preach the gospel" (Rome and the Barbarians, Chantilly, VA: The Teaching Company, 2004).

The King James translators wrote: "[I]nsomuch that most nations under heaven, did shortly after their conversion, hear Christ speaking unto them in their mother tongue, not by the voice of their minister only, but also by the written word translated." "But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (Rom. 10:18). They wrote, "Every country that is under the Sun, is full of these words (of the Apostles and Prophets) and the Hebrew tongue (he meaneth the scriptures in the Hebrew Tongue) is turned not only into the language of the Grecians, but also of the Romans, and Egyptians, and Persians, and Indians, and Armenians and Scythians, and Sauromatians, and briefly unto all the languages that any nation useth...[including] the Gothic tongue... Arabic...Saxon...French...Sclavonian...Dutch...English (i.e. Trevisa

1300s)...Syrian...Ethiopian....” “So that to have the Scriptures in the mother tongue is not a quaint conceit lately taken up...but hath been thought upon, and put in practice of old, even from the first times of the conversion of any nation...(The Holy Bible, London: Robert Barker, 1611, The Translators to the Reader). They add, “As the King’s Speech which he uttered in Parliament, being translated into French, Dutch, Italian and Latin, is still the King’s Speech...No cause therefore why the word translated should be denied to be the word....”

*The Cambridge History of the Bible* states that scriptures were so widely known worldwide that a deacon in the ancient church in Heraclea was “confident that even if all copies of the Scriptures should disappear, Christians would be able to rewrite them from memory....” All pure vernacular scriptures began from the pure spring of languages used by the Holy Ghost in Acts 2; they were preserved and purified, generation by generation, as those root languages developed. Old Latin became Italian, Spanish, French, Portuguese, and Romanian; Gothic became English, German, Danish etc..

God’s safety net in Acts 2 provides that no one language group would have a monopoly on the pure gospel or whose apostasy could thwart its preservation. Just as the enemy would have “destroyed the seed royal” in 2 Kings 11, leaving but one descendant, so too the seed, which is the word of God, would be subject to “many which corrupt the word of God” (2 Cor. 2:17). It is because of God’s fulfilled promise to speak in “other tongues,” that we have support for pure verses in the King James Bible, such as 1 John 5:7, Acts 8:37, and Rev. 16:5, which have been altered or excised by the unorthodox Greek church, but have been preserved in other languages, such as the Old Latin manuscripts, which had their genesis in Acts 2. The aggregate body

of Christ, as the New Testament priesthood, 'received' and preserved the true text.

The word of God is in many ways comparable to Jesus Christ, the Word. Mark 16:12 tells us, "[H]e appeared in another form." The "form" of the Word, Jesus Christ, seemed different at various times and places, yet it was still Jesus. He was in the beginning as the Word (John 1:1); he was seen as the Son of God in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:25); he was a babe in Mary's womb and the "babe wrapped in swaddling clothes" (Luke 2:12); he was observed as a twelve year old teaching in the temple; he was transfigured before Peter, James and John and his "face did shine as the sun"; he was watched on the cross at Calvary, when his visage was marred more than any man; he was three days and three nights in the heart of the earth; he rose and appeared in his "not yet ascended" form to Mary Magdalene, who thought that he was the gardener (John 20:15); he then appeared to two disciples "in another form"; he appeared to the apostle John when "His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire" (Rev. 1:14 ); today Jesus is seated on the right hand of the Father.

Like Jesus, the Word, the written word of God appears in many forms, such as Hebrew, Hungarian, English and Polish. Asking, "Which Jesus do you worship?" would be as wrong as asking which word is true, the pure Hebrew, Greek, Gothic, Old Latin, Anglo-Saxon, English, or Persian Bible. When the Word "appeared in another form," as did the resurrected Christ, "neither believed they them" (Mark 16:12, 13). The resurrection and eternal life of Jesus Christ, the Word, prefigures the resurrection of the "lively oracles" from the now decayed material on which they were originally written. And so today,

the “word of life” appears resurrected from its original form into many languages, in forms such as Arabic script, Roman letters, and Chinese characters (Phil. 2:16). The sign above Christ on the cross was written “in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew” (Luke 23:38). This phrase is omitted in the new bible versions as it indicates too strongly that the Word incarnate, through the word “engrafted,” is now going to speak, not just through Hebrew and Greek letters, but through Latin letters, like the Roman fonts ABCDEFGHIJESUS.

Although the Holy Ghost inspired the word of God for “every nation under heaven,” some have not chosen to keep it widely in print as Amos 8:11 foretells. Like those who “were in doubt” or “mocked” at the Spirit’s inspiration of God’s word for “every nation under heaven,” some skeptics are still digging for the bones of the resurrected Word and his written word in ancient graveyards and Greek *manuscripts* (Acts 2:12).

“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent  
beguiled Eve through his subtilty,  
so your minds should be  
corrupted from the  
simplicity that  
is in Christ.  
2 Cor.  
11:3

