

ORIGINAL LANGUAGES OF THE BIBLE

When you come to the Bible, you need to recognize you are studying a book that was written in different languages. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, with just a little bit (mostly in Daniel) in a dialect called Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Greek. Both languages use alphabets different from ours, and both have grammatical characteristics quite different from English.

To interpret the Bible as quickly and accurately as possible, you need to learn Hebrew and Greek. But that's not to say that you can't understand God's word unless you learn those languages. With study tools available, you can overcome virtually all the hurdles to understanding everything in the Bible. It isn't necessary to understand the other languages, but it's important to recognize their priority for three reasons:

Inspiration applies to the original writings of the Bible. We have accurate copies of the originals, and our translations are very reliable, but your translation is still not the inspired original.

A time gap of 1900 to 2300 years exists between you and the originals. One part of understanding the cultures in which the Bible was revealed is dealing with the languages involved.

Idioms are expressions unique to a particular language and culture. ("Hot dog" has meanings in our culture which are quite different from "a warm canine.") Part of dealing with Bible languages is understanding idioms which are virtually impossible to translate word-for-word.

Without learning Hebrew and Greek, you can do two very helpful things to cope with the priority of the original languages of the Bible:

Use a good translation for study. The *New American Standard Bible* and *The Legacy Standard* are the best current literal translations, and should be your study Bible. The popular *New International Version* is the best "thought-for-thought" translation. It's good for children and for reading extended passages for an overview, but it's not a good study translation.

Spend some time searching good resources. Commentaries and word study books are God's provision for us to understand His word clearly despite the language barrier.