

Definition of Words Part 3

... the meaning of words

In REVIEW

From the 1200's A.D. to the middle of the 1700's A.D. the word "**begotten**" did not mean to bring forth a child as in a father/son relationship; that definition for the English word did not begin to be recorded in writings of the day until after the days of Shakespeare.

BE

Between the 1200's and the 1700's, the word was part of the "**BE**" verbs that were forming in the English language. (I am, is, are, was, were, be, being, been) At that time, the "**BE**" verbs were defined as a *state of being*. We still use them for that today, but by the 1700's, they were also gaining momentum to mean to *show action*. For Wycliffe in his 1380 A.D. translation of the Latin into English and for Tyndale in his 1525 A.D. translation of the Greek to English, "**BE**" was a *state of being*. Its use in a compound word meant "**I am.**"

GOTTEN

In that same time, the Middle English "**GOTTEN**" meant to *obtain or acquire*.

BEGOTTEN

Therefore, "**BEGOTTEN**" in the John 3:16 translations of Wycliffe and Tyndale meant "obtainable I am" Son. To add to that the word "**ONLY**" which *meant there never was and never will be another one like Him*, we grasp the true nature of this title as Jesus was explaining it to Nicodemus in the third chapter of John. When God gave the world Jesus, the only God was finally totally obtainable and touchable to man. "**ONLY BEGOTTEN**" was not used to *show action*; it was used to show the *state of the LORD's being among humanity*.

With the turn of the 1700's, the incorrect definition for the word **begotten** *caught hold and the word was not properly changed to something that would keep the original meaning. Staying with the word BEGOTTEN* caused half the damage used in false theologies about Jesus,

but the word firstborn caused the other half!

Continuing with Interpretation Difficulty # 4: Word Studies

We continue with the difficulty of

A ROOT WORD/WORD STUDY with incorrect definitions

Root
Word/**WORD**
STUDY with
incorrect
definitions

Remember, when we read a translation today that is still using words from the 1500's through the 1900's, there is a huge possibility that we are not using the correct definitions for those words.

Let's cut to the chase and get right into this word study problem with the term

FIRSTBORN! *We have already discovered in past lessons all the tools we need to find today's word for what the Greek meant!*

A SCRIPTURE EXAMPLE using FIRSTBORN

Let's use a hard one. Speaking of Jesus, Paul says the following.

Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the **firstborn** of all creation.

What is the right Greek word?

From a
Concordance
we find

One Greek word is translated **firstborn** in the English versions.

Original Language	Transliteration	Strongs	Occurrences
πρωτότοκος	prôtotokos	<G4416a>	8

G4416a, Prototokos is the Greek word translated **firstborn** in our English versions eight times. Therefore, we are dealing with the right Greek word! It is a compound word coming from **G4413, protos** meaning *first or chief or supreme*, and **G5088 tikto** meaning *to bring forth*. **But remember, the combined definitions of a compound Greek word rarely give the meaning of the newly created Greek word.**

It might point us in the right direction in our research and it might not. Therefore, to take the combined definitions and say, "He is the image of the invisible God, **the first or chief brought forth** of all creation" still leaves us without a clear definition of the meaning when Tyndale used it in 1525 A.D.

From the
Online
Etymology
Dictionary
we find

At just a glance, we see an interesting difference in the definition we use for firstborn today.

In the Middle English, the word **born** was **boren**. **Boren** did not mean to bear a child. From the early 1400's it was used in the sense of "**character or quality**." The earliest record of the use of the word to mean being born in context of a birth was in 1710 A.D.

So, there it is!!!!

When William Tyndale translated the Greek in 1525 A.D. it meant the following!

Colossians 1:15 He is the image of the invisible God, the **chief (or supreme) in character (of God)** of all creation.

It means He was FULLY GOD!

**It had nothing to do with birth; it was about Jesus being God!
It was about Jesus being the IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD,
in every way, just like it says in context.**

It has nothing to do with His earthly birth except that He humbled Himself to take on flesh and come to earth as man!

**In the context of the Colossians passage,
He was the invisible creator of it all - now visible!**

Born Versus **Begat** Versus **Birth**

BORN

When Tyndale, Wycliffe, Coverdale and Rogers (Matthew) used the word "born," it meant the *quality or character* of a person. We still use that definition today when we say a person is a born engineer, born speaker, born athlete or born swimmer. It means that the person has always had the quality or character needed to succeed in the mentioned field. Just to repeat, the definition of the word "born" with respect to a birth did not become common until the 1700's.

BEGAT

If Tyndale, Wycliffe, Coverdale and Rogers (Matthew) intended to translate the Greek or Latin to mean the birth of a son, they would have used the common everyday word "begat." That is what they did! It was the common English word used to formally communicate the birth of an offspring of man or animal as recorded in written documents. "Begat" and "begotten" seem to be cousins in our modern thinking but they are not. We covered this point in the last lesson.

BIRTH

Tyndale, Wycliffe, Coverdale and Rogers (Matthew) could have used the word "birth." In Middle English, "bir" meant to conceive. The "th" meant to bring forth. The word was the common word in use to mean the birth of a child or animal as well as the fruit on a tree or the flower of a plant, etc. We use that same definition today!

Our first English translator could have used "begat" or "birth" in the Colossians passage had either been the best word, but neither fit the intent of the original language. "**Born**" was the best word of their day although its archaic meaning/definition is not used nor understood in our culture today.

One more things in Colossians 1:15

“... of all creation.”

“Creation,” used in this passage, is *ktisis* G2937. It is always used in the New Testament to address the Divine work of the Creator. (See Strong’s Concordance for more information.) It is properly used when discussing that which was founded from nothing. Our use in this definition of the word “founded” is extremely important here! In Classical Greek, Homer used the word in the same sense and context.

Jesus, the full character of the invisible God, now visible, founded all of creation. He was not part of it, He created it. Let’s look in context at the next two verses in Colossians.

For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on the earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and by Him. He was before all things, and in Him all things hold together. Colossians 1:16-17

The context of Colossians 1:15-17 provides the definition of the meaning of ktisis!
But we can’t stop there! We just saw the word “created” again in verse 16.

“For by Him all things were created...”

“Created” is the Greek word *ktisis*, G2936. (See Strong’s Concordance). The definition of this word is *I create, I form, I shape, I found or I make*, and **it always applies to the Supreme God alone!**

Note: Hellenistic Greek (Koine Greek) has 10 different words that could have been used in this passage; two were used here. If any of the other eight had been used, the context could have been construed that Jesus was the first creation of God and He then created everything else. But that is not the case in this passage. We should be so grateful that Greek is so specific in its word use that certain words mean certain things. **In this case, Paul’s specific selection of words tells us that Jesus was the Sovereign Creator of everything and He was the invisible God Who created it all and then came to earth as the same invisible God, now visible!**

As a final example of the tragedy of
A ROOT WORD/WORD STUDY with incorrect definitions
Let’s look at the Book of 1st Timothy.

King James Wording in the Book of 1st Timothy <i>From 1750 AD until the New King James was published in 1982²⁸</i>	Meaning Today
King James Bible 1 Timothy 1:10 For whoremongers , for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers ,	Immoral men (not women) slave dealers

We can use the book of 1st Timothy to show us the magnitude of difficulties in applying new definitions to old words. The words highlighted in each verse in this overview were perfect for the common everyday person to understand without the need for interpretation in the early 1700's; however, by the late 1900's, new definitions warped the true meaning and, in many cases, tainted the selection of modern words for newer versions.

whoremongers

The first word is **whoremongers**. Notice how it is translated in the modern versions.

- [New International Version](#) - for the sexually immoral
- [New Living Translation](#) - for people who are sexually immoral
- [English Standard Version](#) - the sexually immoral
- [New American Standard Bible](#) - and immoral men
- [Contemporary English Version](#) - who are sexual perverts
- [Holman Christian Standard Bible](#) - for the sexually immoral
- [International Standard Version](#) - those involved in sexual immorality
- [NET Bible](#) - sexually immoral people
- [New Heart English Bible](#) - for the sexually immoral
- [GOD'S WORD® Translation](#) - people involved in sexual sins
- [New American Standard 1977](#) - and immoral men
- [Jubilee Bible 2000](#) - for fornicators
- [American Standard Version](#) - for fornicators
- [English Revised Version](#) - for fornicators

What is wrong with that? All the versions support the meaning as all people, male and female, who indulge in sexual sins.

Here is the problem, Tyndale used the right word when he chose **whoremonger**. We do not use the word "whore" in our common, daily, public language these days, but in the days of Shakespeare it was a common word for a woman who charged men for sexual favors. Shakespeare was so fond of it that he used it 93 times in his writings. Not so many decades ago the word *harlot* had replaced it. Today, we would use the word *prostitute*. All three of the words applied to women mainly in context. But the tragedy in this passage, and other Scriptures translated with the same mistake is that the word **monger** is attached to it. That word directs the intent of the meaning

²⁸ Various versions of the 1750 King James were updated because of obsolete words for interpretation purposes by individuals through the years. The most famous were the Scofield (1909 and updated in 1917) and Ryrie (1978) additions.

away from the woman and places it on the man who seeks her out. The word **monger** means *dealer in* or *one who enjoys going to the market of*.

Thankfully, the newer versions do not use *harlot* or *prostitute* in this passage because those words would be incorrect for God's intent. However, simply saying the "sexually immoral" or "fornicators" misses the mark by applying the passage to both males and females, it does not! **The passage should be clearer to indicate men who seek out and pay for the sexual services of women. That is what whoremonger meant when Tyndale used the word in his translation. It is also the meaning of the Greek word used by Paul.** (Note: Paul is speaking to men in this part of the book. He will address women beginning in 1 Timothy 2:9)

Notice again the verse: "For **whoremongers**, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for **menstealers**, ..."

This is a list. If the word **whoremongers** was applicable to both men and women who entered into all forms of immoral sins, why would there be a need for the second item in the list that says, "**for them that defile themselves with mankind?**" **That phrase is mistranslated too; either the word *sodomite* or *homosexual* would have fit the Greek that Paul used.**

menstealers

The third word in Paul's list is **menstealers**. At face value, this seems like a word that we do not use but we should be able to update it easily. **We would think that it meant *kidnappers***. Notice how it is translated in a few modern versions.

[New International Version](#) - for slave traders

[New Living Translation](#) - slave traders

[English Standard Version](#) - enslavers

[New American Standard Bible](#) - kidnappers

[Christian Standard Bible](#) - slave traders

[Contemporary English Version](#) - kidnappers

[Holman Christian Standard Bible](#) - for kidnappers

[English Revised Version](#) - for menstealers

With that short list, we should be able to tell quite quickly that there is a problem with the translations. Should it have the meaning of a ***slave trader*** or a ***kidnapper?***

When Tyndale used the word **menstealers**, the world was openly and blatantly in the midst of the era of slave trade and that included those people coming to America. People were being taken from their homes, basically jailed and then sold as slaves. It was happening in Paul's day too. The world without Christ had made slave dealing a profitable business. After America became a nation, a Christian nation to boot, it would still take 90 years for that practice to be legally brought to an end. The optimal word is legally. The fact that the business became illegal does not mean it totally ended.

As you look at the versions I listed, it is easy to see which versions relied on previous versions and poor word study scholarship was used. **The word *menstealers* meant *slave dealers* in those first English Bibles.**

Note: The English phrase “**for them that defile themselves with mankind**” is one word in Greek, *arsenokoitais*. It means *homosexual or sodomite* and should have been translated that way!

<p>King James Bible 1 Timothy 2:12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.</p>	<p>permit</p>
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This one threw me for a loop in high school! Not because of the word *suffer*, but because my preacher taught us that it meant **permit** and when I would get in a terrible position in life my father would say “*suffer not.*” He meant, “don’t worry about that son!” The complication came when the preacher would say “this word should be better translated **permit,**” and what he meant was “women should not be permitted to teach in the church.” **THAT MADE NO SENSE TO ME!** My Sunday School teachers were women, my Vacation Bible School teachers were women, the major missionary group in the church were women – the WMU – Women’s Missionary Union, my Sunday night Training Union teachers were women and my church choir teachers were women! **MEN WERE NOWHERE TO BE FOUND!** And the preacher was trying to tell me **women were not to have authority in the church and they were to keep silent!** **IF THE WOMEN KEPT SILENT, AND THE MEN WERE NOT TALKING, CHURCH WOULD HAVE BEEN REALLY BORING!**

Obviously, none of my thoughts were correct in interpreting this passage. It means that the men of the church must take the leadership role and the women should follow their lead. A great deal more can be said about this for clarification, but time does not permit it in this lesson. Let’s look at a few more words in 1st Timothy whose meanings have changed.

<p>King James Bible 1 Timothy 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach;</p>	<p>self-restraint</p>
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We still use the word “vigilant” today, but our definition is not correct for the message in this verse. To us it means *keeping careful watch for possible danger or difficulties* or it means *faithfully staying with a task or duty until completion.* But as we can see, that is not the intent of Paul’s usage. Today we must use the term **self-restraint** to get the right meaning. **What a difference!**

<p>King James Bible 1 Timothy 4:12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.</p>	<p>conduct</p>
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Who would have ever thought that the word “conversation” in Tyndale’s day would have been the same as our word “conduct” today? But had we paid attention to the list, we should have noticed something was misplaced when “in word,” and “in **conversation**” were in the same list, and right next to each other. Wouldn’t “**in word**” mean the same thing as “**in conversation?**” That should have been a big **RED FLAG.** In Tyndale’s day, our conversation was our conduct; it had less to do with our speech and more to do with how we acted and the things we did.

King James Bible 1 Timothy 5:11 But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry;	grow
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“Wax” is not a word that is used today as it was in the 1500’s. I heard it only in church as a child because we used the KING JAMES VERSION and people tend to use the lingo of their version of the Bible in church although they may never have used it in the home or out in public. My dad and I used the word “wax” out in the garage because in those days when you made a piece of furniture you would then *wax it* for the finish coat for protection for moisture! That had absolutely nothing to do with Paul’s words in this passage. **Here, “wax” simply means to grow and that is how it was used in Tyndale’s day too!**

King James Bible 1 Timothy 5:13 And withal they learn <i>to be</i> idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.	besides
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“**Withal,**” **what in the world?** Doesn’t “withal” mean “with all?” No! It actually means *as a further factor or consideration*. With that definition we can understand Paul’s intent; however, we do not use the word “withal” very often in our language today. Paul’s intent in this verse might better mean *apart from that or in addition* and the best word to use today would be “**besides.**”

King James Bible 1 Timothy 6:20 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane <i>and</i> vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:	knowledge
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Finally, in chapter six Tyndale uses the word “**science.**” The Greek word was *gnoseosi* but the Latin word was *scire* which later became *scientia*. Old French hung on to the *scientia* in that language and it finally made it into Middle English as **science**. **In its entire journey through those languages it meant knowledge or learning!**

But what kind of knowledge?

In Tyndale’s day it meant finding the **absolute truth!** With that we find Paul warning Timothy to avoid the “profane *and* vain babblings, and oppositions of **science** falsely.” In other words, Timothy was to stay away from all the rhetoric of man in opposition to the truth as Paul had presented it from the LORD. Today, we think of science in a different way! It is based in methodology, repeatable experiments that always end with the same results. It is predicated by hunches, visions and intuition. First, we do it to see if it something is true. If we cannot do it, it can’t be true. That is not Paul’s position. For him, absolute truth comes from the knowledge given by the LORD to man, breathed from God.

**One more lesson and a few more things to pull it all together
and we will be done!**