

RichardP says:

June 22, 2017 at 11:24 am

All writing is done within cultural context. Except fiction.

Inspired writing needs no cultural context – so long as it is not addressing cultural issues.

With regards to letting scripture interpret scripture (something I agree with):

- How many New Testament writers use the phrase ‘proper and fitting help’ when discussing the responsibilities of a wife toward her husband.
- Where did God use the term ‘submit’ when telling Eve what her relationship with Adam would be (not should be; would be)

That is – what did God actually say? If we are truly letting scripture interpret scripture, are not God’s words higher on the hierarchy than any one else’s?

Note that New Testament writers state that Adam was created first, that woman was created for man. If we can use only the words actually used, if we cannot assume what they mean, then we cannot say these words mean “proper and fitting help”. Or – if we can make that assumption here, that frees us to make assumptions elsewhere. It must be one or the other. It cannot be both.

God did not speak just to hear himself talk. He spoke to be understood. That means God spoke to the writers of the Bible in languages that they understood, using imagery and figures of speech that they understood, and cultural context that they understood. God did not speak to them in Old English, nor did he speak in Klingon. He spoke in their own language, and spoke to their cultural context. Which means that the original writing had to be translated if it was to be available to anyone other than those who spoke the language of the writers. That translation was as necessary at the time of the original writing as it is now – as the world at the time of the original writings did not all speak the same language, nor did they all have the same culture.

I would take most comments in this thread more seriously if they were debating the meanings present in the original languages God spoke in, and the cultural context in which they were spoken, instead of debating the meanings present in Old English. God did not speak in Old English.

Example: ‘meet’ is Old English for proper and fitting. How many folks in this corner keep misusing that word as ‘mate’ – which confers none of the meaning of ‘meet’ in Old English. From which Old Testament pagan God does the phrase ‘God rides on the wind’ borrow? If you don’t know, you cannot possibly know what was meant by that phrase or why it was uttered. But it was a cultural context understood by the Hebrew folks to whom the words were first presented.

Of all folks who populate this corner, Boxer has surprised me the most with immediately going to the Old English of the King James instead of the original words in the original languages in the original cultures.

All writing is done within cultural context. All translation is also done within cultural context. And often that cultural context was political. If you don’t know that King James ordered his translation to

translate troublesome / unclear phrases in a way that would explicitly support the ecclesiastical church structure, then you are at a disadvantage. The King James version was created to support a church structure that already existed within a political power structure. One would think that a church structure should emerge out of an unbiased translation of the original words into a current language and context.

If God had wanted each of us to understand exactly what he meant, he would have made it so. He didn't. Consider the number of denominations, bible translations, distinctives, confessions, creeds, etc. There is no clear universal understanding of what God said and meant now or ever. That is the missing context in all of these conversations. Old English won't help us sort that out. Original words and images and figures of speech and social contexts help us get closer, but not perfect.

Thus, the need for the working of the Holy Spirit, as described upthread.