

Written Response to Question about Matthew 24:28 during a private Bible study

**Question in Summary** - Is it strange that the New International Version replaces the word "eagles" in Matthew 24:28 with the word "vultures?"

**Response by Jeremiah Embs in summary:** Yes, the NIV incorrectly translates the Greek word used in the text. See the full response below to understand how I came to that conclusion.

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### Full Response to Question

The KJV text says in Matthew 24:28, "For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

The NIV text says, "Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather."

In order to establish whether this conflict was due to a conflict between various Greek texts used in translation I searched three common Greek texts. The first represents the "majority text" while the other two represent the "minority text."

**The Greek text from Stephanus (1550 A.D.) reads, "ὅπου γάρ ἐάν ἢ τὸ πτώμα ἐκεῖ συναθήσονται οἱ ἄετοι "**

**The Greek text from Westcott and Hort text (1881) reads, "οπου εαν η το πτωμα εκει συναθησονται οι αετοι "**

**The Greek text from Nestle-Aland text 26th/27th edition reads, "ὅπου ἐάν ἢ τὸ πτώμα ἐκεῖ συναθήσονται οἱ ἄετοι; "**

Besides the omission of the word "γάρ" (transliteration = gar, meaning "for" in English) the texts are the same, so we have determined that the differing translations are not as a result of differences in the Greek texts used by the translators. Now we must determine as to which translation is correct or if both translations can be considered acceptable. The Greek word translated as "eagles" in the KJV and "vultures" in the NIV is ἄετοι .

**ἄετοι - transliteration = ah-eh-toi (as oi in oil).**

The word is a subject-plural-declension of the noun "αετος (ah-eh-tos)." In other words, "αετος" is a plural form of a noun used as the subject of the verb "will be gathered." By checking a Greek lexicon we can discover common ways a Greek word can be properly translated into English. I consulted two of them. I detail my process hereafter.

Using Strong's Concordance I looked up the word "eagles" and noted the Strong's reference number given next to the verse in question to find the Strong's Reference Number to the Greek Dictionary in the back of volume. The number given for "eagles" in Matthew 24:28 is #105.

Strong's at #105 reads,

**"αετος ah-et-os' ; from the same as 109; an eagle (from its wind-like flight);- eagle"**

I checked #109 and its definition concerns breath and air, not another animal, so the origin of the word doesn't allow for "vultures" either. The Greek word seems to have no other animal associated with it according to Strong. That is proof #1.

I also noted that the word is used another time in the Bible at Luke 17:37 which renders the word as "eagles" also. Luke 17:37 is the proper cross reference for Matthew 24:28. This further confirms that the word was translated properly as "eagles" in Matthew 24:28 for it was used consistently by the King James translators. That is proof #2.

The second lexicon I consulted concurs with Strong for proof #3. The Greek-English Lexicon - Liddell and Scott<sup>1</sup> reads,

**"Αετος, or αλετος (cf.<sup>2</sup> sub fin.<sup>3</sup>), ου , ο, an eagle, (from αηου, like Lat. *avis*, because of its rapid flight..."**

Another edition of Liddell-Scott I consulted (the Project Perseus<sup>4</sup> edition) notes the word's use in astronomy to refer to the constellation of the flying eagle called Aquila. That is proof #4. After four proofs I consider that the word "αετοι" to be unrelated to vultures to be well established fact given the sources we have to consult.

I then checked a few different "versions" of the Bible that I had at hand and found at least two common versions translate the word properly. One is a "fundamentalist" Bible, while the other is a translation used a "non-orthodox sect." The NKJV (New King James Version) and the NWT (New World Translation) both render the word as the King James Bible does. The New King James Version often agrees with the King James Bible because it uses the majority text most of the time but the NWT relies heavily on the minority text<sup>5</sup>. This however, as we have discovered, is not a difference in texts, but rather in translation.<sup>6</sup> Two Bibles, rendering the word the same as the King James Bible, give us a dual witness for proofs #5 and #6 that the King James text is correct.

Therefore we conclude that the King James text of Matthew 24:28 is correct and New International Version is wrong. End of summary answer. Continue for additional notes about this verse not dealing

1 Greek-English Lexicon - Henry George Liddell, M.A., Robert Scott, M.A., Harper & Brothers, Publishers 82 Cliff Street, New York M.DCCC.XLVIII pg 28

2 abbr. = confer, or conferatur, or consult

3 abbr. = sub finem, Latin for *toward the end of this book*

4 [www.perseus.tufts.edu](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu)

5 Don't let this fool you. There are MANY MAJOR problems with the NKJV and the NWT, but in this case, they are correct. These are only given as dual-witnesses to support the primary witness.

6 Oh boy. The "fundamentalists" that try to bash the King James Bible and replace it with "modern versions" would freak out if they knew that Bible the Jehovah Witnesses use is actually a better translation in this case than the NIV.

with translation which serve as proofs #7 plus however many.

The proper cross references for Matthew 24:28 are probably these below and it has nothing to do with persecuted Christians as all the commentaries in the New Bibles suggest.

Matt 24:28 For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

Ezek 39:17-18 And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood.

18 Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan." With Revelation 19:17-18, "

Rev 19:17-18 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;

18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

A carcass is a dead body, especially that of a bird. A body is a group of people gathered together. Being a dead body this can not be the bride of Christ, Christians, or repentant Jews being picked at by the eagles, but rather the armies called the congregation of the dead that are slaughtered by Christ upon his return to earth at Armageddon in the valley of Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 35:22, Joel 3 (here Joel matches the context of Matthew 24 exactly), Zechariah 2:11) that the birds of the heavens feast upon. That army could include rebellious Jews (Hosea 8) whose dead bodies are feasted upon by literal birds and looted by the heathen armies of modern Egyptians and/or Assyrians (Hosea 7-9 with Duet 28 especially verses 26 and 49, Job 9:26, Job 39 especially verses 27-30). Note the context and some of the very words are the same in those passages and in these following.

Prov 21:16

16 The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead.

Prov 30:17

17 The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the **valley** shall pick it out, and the young **eagles** shall eat it. [emphasis mine]

There are a lot more references for this subject, but those will suffice for now. We must now determine why the NIV translators made such a glaring error.

1. While being translators they can't seem to use a Greek lexicon.
2. They handle the word of God without care.
3. They must make their Bible unique enough that it can be copyrighted for sale. \$\$\$
4. They fail to do proper research, which is basically reason #1.
5. They trusted the corrupt texts and so fell victim to a private interpretation of the verse.
6. By interpreting the verse, rather than simply translating it, they felt justified while corrupting the word of God.

Let me explain reasons five and six in detail.

Properly interpreting a verse of scripture is often difficult and requires reliance on the Holy Spirit and a good examination of the English text. By omitting the conjunction "for" Westcott, Hort, Nestle, and Aland left the believer blind. It is this word "for" that informs the believer that the verse should be interpreted in the light of those verses above it. Even in Luke 17:37 a question by Jesus' disciples informs us also that this verse is not to be interpreted alone.

So then, Luke 17:37 proves the Greek text of Stephanus is correct for retaining the word "for." This is how you can correct "the original Greek" that Bible correctors CLAIM to have simply by using the English of the King James Bible. Ruckman took a lot of heat for saying that you can correct the Greek with the English, but it's true and we just saw an example of it. In this case the English text proves which Greek text retains the proper reading and proves the others to be corrupt.

The creators of the NIV may have made their translating error because of the first error of relying on the corrupted text. Without the word "for" in the verse they fell victim to a "private interpretation" of the verse. Some Bible commentators believe that Matthew 24:28 is a verse prophesying that Christians will be killed and their bodies eaten by birds.

To find out what the NIV translators believed about this verse we can go to two other evil versions of the Bible; the CEV (Contemporary English Version) for the verse in Matthew and the NLT (New Living Translation) for the verse in Luke.

Firstly the CEV translates the word in question as "buzzard," again without any justification from our understanding of Greek for doing so, but by going to the footnote of the CEV we begin to get a clearer picture of how new translators think this verse should be understood and why they were led astray. The CEV also omits the word "for" allowing for the private interpretation found in their footnotes.

**CEV footnote reads "...the word translated "buzzard" also means "eagle" & may refer to the Roman army which had an eagle as its symbol."**

Now we have some information that reveals the source of the error. Apparently some people believe that since eagles were symbols that the Roman army used this verse is saying that Christians will be killed by Romans and left to "buzzards" or "vultures." They use the words "buzzards" or "vultures" because they are seen as being ravenous birds (in our culture) more so than eagles, but by finding proper cross references we see that it's the Bible itself that told us that whatever these birds represent they are eagles, not buzzards or vultures so the word "eagles" is the correct translation and with the lexicons backing us up the proper translation of this verse shouldn't even be a question from now on. I expect the latest edition of the NIV to reflect this (of course I'm being sarcastic), but considering that the latest edition of the NIV is gender neutral (you can't translate Greek and Hebrew into gender neutral language because Greek and Hebrew are not gender neutral languages) I don't really expect that at all.

In Luke 17:37 the NLT renders the same word (the one that can only be properly translated as "eagles") as "vultures" proving that they are following the same private interpretation as the NIV translators. Again, it's the footnote that helps us understand the error in both versions.

**NLT footnote says - "This may mean that God's people will be taken out to the execution grounds and their bodies left to the vultures."**

So once again we see that private interpretation has prevented proper translation. Neither one tells us that one symbol represents two things, but who would take God's people to the execution grounds? ROMANS! And after the Christians are dead what would happen? BIRDS would pick on their bodies. So they are making an error in that they are interpreting birds as possibly representing real birds in one instance and Romans in another only believing they could represent Romans because Romans carried what symbol??? Eagles! But then they drop the word eagles and go for the word vultures or buzzards instead because vultures and buzzards like to pick on dead bodies. The NLT footnote proves they share the same interpretation as that of the CEV notes and I would guess that this interpretation is where the NIV got it's idea to translate the word as "vultures" as well. Both footnotes follow the same twisted logic, but by putting only one side of the interpretation in each version they must have thought no one would catch on to how stupid it sounds. In their minds the birds are tokens of both real men that kill the Christians (because Romans carried standards with eagles on them) AND real birds that pick on the dead bodies of Christians, but by refusing to use the word "eagles" you lose the first interpretation and therefore lose the second which would allow for "buzzards" or "vultures." Thank God we have the whole Bible to put these "scholars" to bed. It would have been better to just translate the word properly without a footnote and leave interpretation to God's Holy Spirit, don't you think? We have simply proven that the error in the NIV translation stems from a PRIVATE interpretation of the verse and NOT from a textual difference in Greek, nor from a TRANSLATIONAL preference permitted by a lexicon. We therefore conclude that the NIV is inferior to the King James Bible. It is, at best (and I mean at best), the word of men who PURPOSELY corrupted the word of God with their OPINION. Stick to the King James Bible and you'll never be wrong in matters of translation.