

# ***God or Lord?***

**Acts 19:20**

**Translation Error in the KJB?**

**Dr. Steve Combs**

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**With a bonus discussion on  
Hope or Faith?  
Hebrews 10:23**

**By Dr. Steve Combs**

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# **Dedication**

The book is dedicated to my precious wife who has loved me and helped me for over forty years. I thank God for her and for His mercy in giving her to me.

## **Other Books by Dr. Steve Combs**

Election and Predestination: Ephesians 1:4-5

The real Biblical truth about election and predestination.

Parallel Greek Received Text and King James Version New Testament:

The TR is one column; the KJB is the second column

The New Testament: The Greek Textus Receptus Global Edition:

Just the Greek text in large readable type, paper and hardcover

A Practical Theology of Bible Translating:

What the Bible says about translating it into the world's languages

A Practical Guide to Bible Translation Projects:

How to set up conduct a successful Bible translation project

The Fellowship of the Mystery: The Book of Ephesians-

A practical in-depth commentary on the Book of Ephesians

The Power of the Gospel, A Survey of Romans:

An in-depth survey of the Book of Romans

The Translator's Greek Grammar of the Textus Receptus:

A Greek grammar of the New Testament based on the Textus Receptus rather than the modern Critical Text

The Legacy Standard Bible and the Questions It Creates:

An answer to the problems created by the new Legacy Standard Bible-What is God's Hebrew Name, Are Christians Servants or slaves?

So Shall My Word Be:

Using Biblical Principles to Judge the Modern Bible Versions Movement

SAMPLE PAGES

# God or Lord?

## Acts 19:20

### A Translation Error in the KJB?

**A**cts 19:20 is a verse that contains a controversial translation in the KJB. It is a difficult problem. It's surprising that there has not been more said about it. At the mildest, critics have characterized it as a difference between the King James Version and the Greek Received Text. It could be far worse, a translation error. The verse reads:

*So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.*

The problem with this verse is the word "God" and the fact that the Greek text does not use the normal word that is translated "God." The normal Greek word for "God" is θεός, *theos*. The word used in Acts 19:20 is κυριος (*Kurios*), which is normally translated "Lord." So, according to the critics the translation *should be* **"word of the Lord," rather than "word of God."** On the surface, the only logical conclusion seems to be that the KJB is in error here. The KJB is not an accurate translation, at least not in this verse. There are others who do not agree and defend the translation choices in the KJB.

*It is clear and unmistakable that the KJB has "God" and the Greek Received Text has Kurios (usually translated Lord).* That is indisputable. On the surface, it also seems certain that this verse is proof that the King James Version is not inerrant. Some, who say Acts 19:20 is an incorrect translation, will also say that the KJB is an accurate translation. However, the word "accurate" means "inerrant." Therefore, if Acts 19:20 is not correct, the KJB is neither inerrant nor accurate. There have been some who find certain ancient

manuscripts and translations which read *theos* or a translation of *theos*, in this verse. However, we accept the Received Text as the preserved Word of God in the Greek language. The Received Text has gone through many editions, but no editor was ever led to change *Kurios* to *theos*. Scrivener edited the Received Text to match the KJB (1881). Not even he would change it. So, we accept the Greek text as being correct.

However, this does not end the argument. There is another side of the coin to examine. The real question is whether the word *Kurios* *always and only* is to be translated "Lord" when applied to God or the Lord Jesus Christ. Put another way, *can Kurios ever correctly be translated "God?"* I would say that most people who read Greek would say no. All of us who have attended Greek elementary school have been taught that *Lord* is THE one and only way to translate *Kurios*, when it applies to God the Father or the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, they say, the *only right way* to translate Acts 19:20 is "the word of the Lord." If *Kurios can be translated "God,"* then the KJB *is accurate* and the translation of Acts 19:20 is not different from the Received Text.

Many of us have done some study in Greek beyond Greek elementary school and we have discovered that Greek words are often far more flexible than we initially learned. Some words carry general meanings that can be translated many ways in different contexts. These words do not always have a set and certain meaning and translation in all contexts. These words must be translated according to the context. Doing so is not always easy. One such word is *ekenosen*. The word means "to make empty, that is, (figuratively) to abase, neutralize, falsify." The word has a base definition, but it applies differently in a figurative sense according to the context. Modern versions translate this literally (sometimes literal means elementary) in Philippians 2:7, "emptied himself." The KJB translates it "made himself of no reputation." The KJB also variously translates the word "made void" and "made of none effect." These various translations of the same word all carry an element of "make empty, neutralize" but the translation must be refined according to the context.

Another example is the Greek word *ginomai*. This word is one of the most flexible words in the New Testament. The basic meaning of the word is "cause to be" and "to become" (Strong's). Once again this word *must* be translated according to its meaning *in the context*.