

Definition of Words

“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” Acts 22:16

Understanding the definition of words in the Bible is a critical part of effective Bible study. When translations were made from the Hebrew and Greek texts, the English words that were used were often capable of several different meanings. For instance, the word “baptize” in the original Greek means “to immerse, submerge; to make whelmed (i.e. fully wet)” (Vines). The English word in most dictionaries is defined as: “to immerse in water or sprinkle or pour water on” (Random House). Many denominations today feel that sprinkling and pouring are acceptable methods of baptism but as we can see from the original Greek word, only complete immersion qualifies as being baptized. In this lesson, we will consider why the definition of words is an important part of our Bible study.

When we first start examining the scriptures as Bible students, we will come across words that we do not understand. For instance the word “repent” is not one that we normally use in our English language. To properly understand the meaning of repent, we need to consult a study aid like a Greek dictionary. If we look up the definition of this word in Vine’s Expository Dictionary it is defined in part as: “to change one’s mind or purpose.” So, when read a passage like Acts 3:19 where it says, *“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out...”* we are able to understand that someone who is in sin needs to repent by changing their mind and turning from their sin. They can then be “converted” so their sins can be forgiven.

Another important consideration when studying different words in the Bible is to make sure we consider the context in which those words are used. For instance, the word “faith” has many different meanings. Therefore, when we look at the original Greek word, we may not get the full meaning unless we also consider the context of the passages where the word is used. An example of this can be found in Romans 3:25. In this passage it talks about Christ Jesus and says, *“whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.”* The word “faith” in this passage is a general term that comes from the Greek word “pistis” and is capable of several different meanings. Vine’s defines it as “moral conviction (of religious truth, or the truthfulness of God or a religious teacher), the system of religious (Gospel) truth itself.” To better understand its meaning, we should also look at the context of what is being taught in the passages around this verse. In this case, it helps to consider what is said in verses 23-26. Notice it says in these passages: **Verse 23** *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”* So, in verse 23, we see that all men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. In verse 24, we are taught that we can have redemption in Christ Jesus and in verse 25 it tells us this redemption is “through faith.” In other words, this atonement is possible if we believe in Jesus. In verse 26, this point is further clarified when it says *“that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”* If we do not have faith, then we cannot have salvation through Jesus. This is a foundational principle for Christians. This was just one example of where the definition of a word along with the context of the passages around a verse helps us to better understand what is being taught.

Questions

1. Define the word “abide” in John 15:4-7 and explain the principle being taught. _____

2. List the various definitions for the word “faith” and list one passage for each definition. _____

3. Look up the English and Greek definitions for the following words and compare their meanings. List one passage for each Greek definition.

Baptized

(English) _____

(Greek) _____

Fellowship

(English) _____

(Greek) _____

Church

(English) _____

(Greek) _____

Prayer

(English) _____

(Greek) _____

Pastor

(English) _____

(Greek) _____

Perfect

(English) _____

(Greek) _____

4. According to Vine’s Expository Dictionary, the word “turn” has 18 different definitions. List one definition that is associated with conversion and list a passage where that word is used. _____

5. One of the Greek words for “judge” is “krino” which is defined by Vine’s as “properly, to distinguish, i.e. decide (mentally or judicially); by implication, to try, condemn, punish:--avenge, conclude, condemn, damn, decree, determine, esteem, judge, go to (sue at the) law, ordain, call in question, sentence to, think.”

This word is used in Matthew 7:1 and in John 8:24. Look at the contexts for both passages and explain why these two passages are referring to two different types of judgments. _____

6. The meaning of words in various languages today often change. The New Testament was written in Koine Greek which is a frozen language. What does the term “frozen language” mean and what is the advantage of the Bible being written in this language? _____

7. Select any word used in the Bible and document the Hebrew or Greek definition. _____

