

# MEANING OF WORDS

In every written language, the meaning of the recorded words must be determined by the context. This is very important because many words have a variety of definitions and some have changed in meaning over the years.

## WORDS WHICH HAVE MORE THAN ONE MEANING

**“Tempt”** has two meanings in the Bible:

To try (prove) in a good sense. Gen.22:1

To try (by soliciting to do evil). Jam.1:13, Mat.4:3

**“Judge”** has several uses in the Bible:

To estimate, examine evidence. 1Cor.15:2

To distinguish, decide. Joh.7:24

To condemn, sentence. Jam.4:11

**“Hate”** is used in two ways.

Despise, wish evil. 1Jo.3:15

To love the less (by comparison). Luk.14:16 (cf. Mat.10:37)

## FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

In **Daniel** and **Revelation** where figurative words are used, a literal meaning presents an absurdity.

Herod is called a **“fox”** in Mat.13:22

**“Let the dead bury the dead,”** Mat.8:22, is surely figurative.

**“This is my blood,”** Mat.26:28, can only be understood in a figurative sense.

*A good “rule-of-thumb” – When a literal meaning presents an absurdity, it must be understood figuratively.*

## HELP IN UNDERSTANDING WORDS

**Abstract and inanimate objects are frequently personified.**

Blood crying out. Gen.4:10

Love personified in 1Co.13

**Words are sometimes used in an ironical manner.**

“You are rich and reign as kings” 1Co.4:8

“Reap where you did not sow” Mat.25:26

**Some people and places have more than one name.**

Bartholomew (in John) is also called Nathaniel (in Matthew, Mark, Luke and Acts)

Matthew is also called Levi (Mar.2:14; Luk.5:27)

Peter is also called Cephas, Simon, Simon bar Jonah, Simeon.

Apostle Paul is also called Saul of Tarsus. Act.13:9

**Several people share the same name.**

James, John, and Mary refer to a number of different people.

Simeon: (1) Second son of Jacob by Leah; (2) a man in Jerusalem described as “righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel.” Luk.2:25,34; (3) ancestor of Jesus. Luk.3:30; (4)

prophet and teacher at Antioch. Also called Niger. Act.13:1-2

Many leaders were called Pharaoh or Herod.

## TO HELP DETERMINE THE PROPER MEANING, USE SYNONYMS

**Baptism** (Act.8:38, Rom.6:4, Joh.3:23) literally means to “dip, plunge or immerse.

Substitute synonyms and see the results. Words such as “sprinkle” won’t work.

**Cup** (Luk.22:17,20; 1Co.11:25-26) refers to the contents.

Substitute “container” for cup and note the results.

## USE OF IDIOMS

### Some current idioms:

“go fly a kite”, “drives me up a wall”, “catch a plane (or a cold)”, “tickled pink”, “spill the beans”, “red herring”, “deep pockets”, “ham it up”, “play it by ear”, “good grief.”

### Some idioms in the Bible:

“lift up the face” means to accept. Job 22:26

“flesh and blood” refers to human beings Mat.16:17 KJ)

“Abraham’s bosom” describes blessedness after death. Luk.16:22

“bowels of mercy” (KJ, Col.3:12) refers to compassion.

*Often the confusion presented by idioms is cleared up in newer translations.*

Obsolete words found in the King James Bible can be understood by comparing it with some of the newer translations.

## USE OF DICTIONARIES

**Modern dictionaries** give current and generally accepted definitions, which may or may not reflect the meanings of the words as used by the writers of the Bible.

**Bible word dictionaries** (such as Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words) can be very helpful.

## USE OF ITALICS IN TEXT

Words printed in *italics* are supplied by the translators when there is a perceived difficulty in a strict word-for-word translation. Many times the verse may be understood without the added words. (Luk.5:33,39; 6:1)

Italicized words may also contribute to confusion. (E.g., The added “He” in John 8:24: “**I am**” – εἰμί (eimi) *i-mee* = **I exist**.)