

## **About DP Literal Bible**

### Quick Guide for Readers:

1. Words *in italics* are not in the original Greek text but should be read by English readers.
2. Words [in square brackets] are in the original Greek but placed out of order. These are generally conjunctions that begin a clause or sentence in English, but are often placed later in Greek.
3. Generally, only two types of words are omitted: First, the definite article (“the”) when it used only for structural purposes in the Greek (such as to indicate a case, to indicate the subject of a sentence); these are of no help to understanding grammar or meaning in English. Second, particles that cannot be translated as separate words in English, but are incorporated into another word.

### Purpose

The careful student of the Bible soon comes to realize, no matter which translation or version they are reading, that they aren’t reading the real Bible. Translators, whether by necessity, accident, or design, add or subtract meaning during the process of translation. If the student lacks adequate Hebrew and/or Greek to read the original, this leave him without recourse.

Completely solving this issue is impossible, for several reasons. First, a truly “literal translation” is oxymoronic, as anyone who has learned a second language realizes. So, from here on out, we will adopt the convention that “literal translation” means mimicking the original text to the greatest degree possible: creating a one-to-one correspondence between the words or phrases of the Greek original and the English. Secondly, even given the previous caveat, a literal translation involves choice. Greek words often support a wide range of possible meanings, and the English translator must translate.

But, all that said, there is room in the Biblical universe for a more literal translation than exists; in fact, there is a lot of room. The most nearly “literal” translation in widespread use today is the New American Standard Bible, upon which more savvy Bible teachers rely, but it is written in idiomatic English; indeed, it would not be usable otherwise, as anyone reading this New Testament will quickly discover.

### Conventions

#### 1. Italics

**Words in italics represent words that are not written in the Greek, but are without question implied.**

This has to be done to reflect the nature of the language. English often uses words to express an idea where Greek uses declensions or verb endings. Students of Spanish will immediately understand that a personal pronoun is unnecessary where a verb has number and case; and like Spanish, Greek frequently omits pronouns. When the original Greek uses the pronoun, it will be in regular type. Thus, “eisi” is translated “*he is*” and “autos eisi” is translated “*he is*”.

The second most common instance is where a noun or pronoun has case but no preposition. (If you have never reflected on the idea, the one place English has retained a substantial array of case inflections is in personal pronouns. Thus, “the cat gave the cat to the cat” is nonsensical, but it is grammatical; whereas “He gave he to he” is both nonsensical and nongrammatical; the grammatically correct form would be “He gave him to him.” Because pronouns are a sole exception in English, most people don’t recognize that “he” and “him” are the same word in different cases. The only other place I can think of, in English, is the possessive use of apostrophe s, a rather simple case ending.)

Anyway, we can make pretty good sense in English of something like, “Him he gave the key,” because “him” is in the objective case. We imply the preposition “to”, i.e., we read the sentence as meaning “To him he gave the key.” Just so in Greek, but to a greater degree.

We always will imply “of” to translate the genitive case. This is done for maximum “literalness”; the reader will have to supply the syntactical meaning. This has the great advantage of retaining (to the degree possible) the ambiguity of certain genitive occurrences in the New Testament, such as “pistis Xristou”. For the dative case, it is simply impossible to do this, and we will make the non-literal choice of preposition for the reader.

## 2. Words in [Square Brackets]

**Words in square brackets occur in the original Greek, but have been moved.**

While I dislike changing word order, Greek often places conjunctions after the beginning of a sentence or clause; if the same word order is used in English, the sentence can become nearly impossible to understand. A text filled with “Said this man and the Peter” meaning “And Peter said ‘this man’” would quickly become tedious, without adding any accuracy.

## 3. Omitted Words

**Only Specific Words, Meaningless in English, are Omitted.**

Greek often has words that are unnecessary in English, such as a definite article with a purely functional use. One major instance is that Greek will insert “the” (with an appropriate case ending) to indicate the case of a difficult or undeclined noun, or to designate the subject of a sentence. I started out putting these in brackets, but it happens often and adds nothing but distraction to read “[the] Jesus” hundreds of times. If Greek used the article to make “Jesus” definite, I’d leave it in; but it does not, and neither does English, and out it goes.

Another class of omitted words are particles used to indicate conditionality, probability, etc. There simply is no English equivalent, and none needed. Usually the English will read correctly. Where there is a particle of conditionality and the English subjunctive is available, we use it.

Readers will often have to make syntactical decisions for themselves; in fact, that is part of the purpose of the work. The indefinite article will not be supplied unless absolutely required, nor will arguably implied definite articles (notably, articles implied by Colwell’s Rule). Expect to see: “[For] root of all the evils is the love of money.”

## 4. Capitalization and Punctuation

**Generally the Capitalization and Punctuation of the First Copiests are Followed.**

we have chosen to follow, as closely as possible, the early Greek copiests’ usage of capitalization and punctuation. Although it was a difficult decision, God and Lord are thus never capitalized.

We change Greek punctuation marks into English equivalents and capitalize the beginnings of sentences – essentially a punctuation convention -- since using Greek conventions would be meaningless and simply make the text even harder to read.

## 2. Square Brackets.

**Matter in square brackets represent words that are written in the Greek, but make no sense when translated into English.**

Greek uses a lot of words that English does not. A prominent example is the definite article, “the” in English. In English, this makes a noun definite, and it is omitted when unnecessary. In Greek, however, the definite article can be used for other purposes, such as to indicate which substantive (i.e., noun or pronoun) is the subject of a sentence, to clarify the case of a substantive, or to turn a verb or adjective into a substantive. (This last use is one we see frequently in English, e.g., *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly*. But in Greek it is much more extensive, and one sees the definite article with infinitives, participles of all sorts, etc.)

Another frequent unwanted guest, for English readers, is the Greek habit of putting a conjunction (especially “de”) somewhere after the first word, even though it is meant to tie the entire sentence to the preceding one. The Greeks did not have paragraphs and tied groups of sentences together by putting conjunctions in them. Where this occurs at the beginning of a sentence, it is easily readable in English, even if it is stylistically awkward. (This is why so many verses in translation begin with “and”.)

This can become ridiculous-sounding in English. John 2:2 begins, “eklethe de kai ho Iesous kai”, three conjunctions in six words. We translate this, “Were invited [and] also Jesus and . . .”

So, again, in an attempt to be as literal as possible, we include almost every word and in the same order as the original; but to get the sense of a verse, you will want to train your eye just to skip over anything in square brackets. “Almost” every word, because 1) sometimes Greek uses functional words (called “particles”, and more properly termed “morphemes” than “words”) that are meaningless except in the effect they have on another word, and indicating their presence as a separate would be both difficult and unhelpful and 2) Sometimes a combination of literal words have such a precise idiomatic meaning that it seems silly not to give the idiom. “Ei me”, for example, literally “if not”, might be translated “except”.