

## **The Fallacious "Agapao vs. Phileo" Argument Against the KJV**

*The following is an excerpt of a letter which was written in response to a discussion I had with men who deny the inspiration of the King James Version of the Bible (or any other English translation) and who made the old "Agapao vs. Phileo" argument from John 21:15-17 to try to prove that one has to know the original Hebrew and Greek languages in order to fully understand the word of God.*

I believe that God has preserved His word to this very day as He promised that he would (Psa 12:6-7, Mat 5:18; Mat 24:35). In the days of the Old Testament, God only gave His word to Israel (Psa 147:19-20; Rom 3:1-2; Rom 9:4) and it was preserved in the Hebrew language, and if a person wanted to read the word of God they would have needed to learn Hebrew. At the very beginning of the New Testament era, we see that this changed dramatically. On the day of Pentecost, the church was filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spoke the word of God to Jews of "every nation under heaven" (Act 2:5) and "every man heard them speak in his OWN LANGUAGE" (Act 2:6). Shortly after that, the gospel was no longer given only to the Jews, but to the Gentiles (many of which lived in the same nations as the Jews in Acts 2) as well (Rom 1:16) beginning with Cornelius in Acts 10. Jesus said that "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in ALL THE WORLD for a witness unto ALL NATIONS..." (Mat 24:14). This by necessity means one of two things: 1) either the whole world would be made to learn and understand Greek because it was the original language the gospel was written in, or 2) the gospel would be translated into the divers languages of the world. Since God was the one who confounded the language of men at the tower of Babel, it is obvious that the world was not going to be made to learn one language so they could have the gospel preached unto them. Given this fact and the fact that God translated His word into the languages of every nation under heaven on the day of Pentecost, it would stand to reason that the method by which the gospel would be preached to all the world was by the Bible being translated into different languages.

It should not be necessary to prove that God can use fallible men to translate an infallible Bible, since He is omnipotent and nothing is too great for Him, but since this seems to be such a stumbling block for those who have had the modern day "scholars" teach them it is not possible, I will give you a Biblical example which cannot be gainsaid. In Acts 22:1-21, Paul spoke unto the Jews in the HEBREW tongue, but the words that he spoke were written in Greek. You both would agree that Acts 22:1-21 in the "original" Greek is the inspired word of God, and that this inspired word of God is a TRANSLATION of what was originally spoken in a different language. I bring this up simply to prove that God can use a man to make an inspired, infallible, inerrant translation of His word.

Based upon these three facts: 1) that God has promised to preserve His word, 2) that God's word in the New Testament was delivered to men from every nation under heaven in their own language, and 3) that God is perfectly capable of using fallible man to make an infallible translation of His word; it is completely logical and reasonable to conclude that God has preserved His word in an inerrant, infallible translation in the English language, a language that more Christians speak than any other language on this earth. It

is not blind faith to believe that we have a preserved, infallible, and inerrant Bible in our own language. It takes just as much faith to believe that God used fallible men to make an infallible copy of His word in Greek and Hebrew, and it takes much more faith to believe that the word of God is preserved in copies that you have never actually seen and could not read and understand even if you did. Furthermore, it is hypocritical and unreasonable to believe that the KJV is an imperfect translation, and then to correct it by looking up the underlying Greek in a lexicon that was TRANSLATED from Greek to English so that you could know what the Greek words mean since neither of you speak Greek.

That being said, I would like to address one of the arguments that you both made in support of your theory that the KJV is not the preserved, inspired, and infallible word of the living God. You both brought up the fact that in John 21:15-17 when Jesus asked Peter “lovest thou me”, that the first two times He used the Greek word “agapao” (G25) and the third time, he used the Greek word “phileo” (G5368), and you reason from this that since two different words were used and they were both translated as “lovest”, then therefore this was an inaccurate translation. According to James Strong (who apparently is infallible since so many go to him to disprove the infallibility of the KJV) “agapao” is defined as:

**Agapao-** to love (in a social or moral sense): - (be-) love (-ed). Compare G5368 and “phileo” is defined as:

**Phileo-** to be a friend to (*fond of* [an individual or an object]), that is, have affection for (denoting *personal* attachment, as a matter of sentiment or feeling; while G25 is wider, embracing especially the judgment and the *deliberate* assent of the will as a matter of principle, duty and propriety: the two thus stand related very much as G2309 and G1014, or as G2372 and G3563 respectively; the former being chiefly of the *heart* and the latter of the *head*); specifically to *kiss* (as a mark of tenderness): - kiss, love.

The English word for love is defined from the Oxford English Dictionary as:

**Love- 1. a. trans.** With personal obj. or one capable of personification: To bear love to; to entertain a great affection or regard for; to hold dear.

One doesn't even have to be a Greek scholar to see that “agapao” means “to love”, and “phileo” means “to have affection for” and the English word “love” means “to bear love to” and have “great affection for”, and therefore the English word “love” is an accurate translation of *both* “agapao” and “phileo” because the definition of it includes BOTH of the definitions of those two Greek words.

This should be enough to convince any reasonable person that Joh 21:15-17 is an accurate translation, but I will also offer you less subjective proof from the Bible itself (the Greek Bible, even) if you will be kind enough to keep reading.

The following are five examples from the Greek text where “agapao” and “phileo” are used interchangeably.

- 1) Jesus said the Pharisees loved (agapao) the uppermost seats in the synagogues (Luk 11:43).

“Woe<sup>3759</sup> unto you,<sup>5213</sup> Pharisees!<sup>5330</sup> for<sup>3754</sup> ye love<sup>25</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> uppermost seats<sup>4410</sup> in<sup>1722</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> synagogues,<sup>4864</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> greetings<sup>783</sup> in<sup>1722</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> markets.<sup>58</sup>”

In a parallel passage, Jesus said that the Pharisees loved (phileo) the uppermost rooms at feasts and the chief seats in the synagogues in (Mat 23:6-7) and (Luk 20:46).

“And<sup>5037</sup> love<sup>5368</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> uppermost rooms<sup>4411</sup> at<sup>1722</sup> feasts,<sup>1173</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> chief seats<sup>4410</sup> in<sup>1722</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> synagogues,<sup>4864</sup> And<sup>2532</sup> greetings<sup>783</sup> in<sup>1722</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> markets,<sup>58</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> to be called<sup>2564</sup> of<sup>5259</sup> men,<sup>444</sup> Rabbi,<sup>4461</sup> Rabbi.<sup>4461</sup>” (Mat 23:6-7)

“Beware<sup>4337</sup> of<sup>575</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> scribes,<sup>1122</sup> which desire<sup>2309</sup> to walk<sup>4043</sup> in<sup>1722</sup> long robes,<sup>4749</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> love<sup>5368</sup> greetings<sup>783</sup> in<sup>1722</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> markets,<sup>58</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> the highest seats<sup>4410</sup> in<sup>1722</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> synagogues,<sup>4864</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> the chief rooms<sup>4411</sup> at<sup>1722</sup> feasts;<sup>1173</sup>” (Luk 20:46)

We can see here in (Greek) words too plain to deny that “agapao” and “phileo” can be, and are, used interchangeably in the Bible.

- 2) The Bible says that whom the Lord loveth (agapao), he chastens in (Heb 12:6).

“For<sup>1063</sup> whom<sup>3739</sup> the Lord<sup>2962</sup> loveth<sup>25</sup> he chasteneth,<sup>3811</sup> and<sup>1161</sup> scourgeth<sup>3146</sup> every<sup>3956</sup> son<sup>5207</sup> whom<sup>3739</sup> he receiveth.<sup>3858</sup>” (Heb 12:6)

In the very same context, Jesus says that He rebukes and chastens as many as He loves (phileo) in (Rev 3:19).

“As many as<sup>3745, (1437)</sup> I<sup>1473</sup> love,<sup>5368</sup> I rebuke<sup>1651</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> chasten:<sup>3811</sup> be zealous<sup>2206</sup> therefore,<sup>3767</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> repent.<sup>3340</sup>” (Rev 3:19)

Again, we can see here in (Greek) words too plain to deny that “agapao” and “phileo” can be, and are, used interchangeably in the Bible.

- 3) The Bible refers several times to the disciple (assumedly John) whom Jesus loved (agapao) (Joh 19:26; 21:7; 21:20).

“When Jesus<sup>2424</sup> therefore<sup>3767</sup> saw<sup>1492</sup> his mother,<sup>3384</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> disciple<sup>3101</sup> standing by,<sup>3936</sup> whom<sup>3739</sup> he loved,<sup>25</sup> he saith<sup>3004</sup> unto his<sup>848</sup> mother,<sup>3384</sup> Woman,<sup>1135</sup> behold<sup>2400</sup> thy<sup>4675</sup> son!<sup>5207</sup>” (Joh 19:26)

“Therefore<sup>3767</sup> that<sup>1565</sup> disciple<sup>3101</sup> whom<sup>3739</sup> Jesus<sup>2424</sup> loved<sup>25</sup> saith<sup>3004</sup> unto Peter,<sup>4074</sup> It is<sup>2076</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> Lord.<sup>2962</sup> Now<sup>3767</sup> when Simon<sup>4613</sup> Peter<sup>4074</sup> heard<sup>191</sup> that<sup>3754</sup> it was<sup>2076</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> Lord,<sup>2962</sup> he girt<sup>1241</sup> his fisher's coat<sup>1903</sup> unto him, (for<sup>1063</sup> he was<sup>2258</sup> naked,) <sup>1131</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> did cast<sup>906</sup> himself<sup>1438</sup> into<sup>1519</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> sea.<sup>2281</sup>” (Joh 21:7)

“Then<sup>1161</sup> Peter,<sup>4074</sup> turning about,<sup>1994</sup> seeth<sup>991</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> disciple<sup>3101</sup> whom<sup>3739</sup> Jesus<sup>2424</sup> loved<sup>25</sup> following;<sup>190</sup> which<sup>3739</sup> also<sup>2532</sup> leaned<sup>377</sup> on<sup>1909</sup> his<sup>846</sup> breast<sup>4738</sup> at<sup>1722</sup> supper,<sup>1173</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> said,<sup>2036</sup> Lord,<sup>2962</sup> which<sup>5101</sup> is<sup>2076</sup> he that betrayeth<sup>3860</sup> thee?<sup>4571</sup>” (Joh 21:20)

The Bible also refers to Jesus loving (phileo) the same disciple in (Joh 20:2).

“Then<sup>3767</sup> she runneth,<sup>5143</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> cometh<sup>2064</sup> to<sup>4314</sup> Simon<sup>4613</sup> Peter,<sup>4074</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> to<sup>4314</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> other<sup>243</sup> disciple,<sup>3101</sup> whom<sup>3739</sup> Jesus<sup>2424</sup> loved,<sup>5368</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> saith<sup>3004</sup> unto them,<sup>846</sup> They have taken away<sup>142</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> Lord<sup>2962</sup> out<sup>1537</sup> of the<sup>3588</sup> sepulcher,<sup>3419</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> we know<sup>1492</sup> not<sup>3756</sup> where<sup>4226</sup> they have laid<sup>5087</sup> him.<sup>846</sup>” (Joh 20:2)

Again, we can see here in (Greek) words too plain to deny that “agapao” and “phileo” can be, and are, used interchangeably in the Bible.

4) The Bible says that Jesus loved (agapao) Lazarus in (Joh 11:5).

“Now<sup>1161</sup> Jesus<sup>2424</sup> loved<sup>25</sup> Martha,<sup>3136</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> her<sup>846</sup> sister,<sup>79</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> Lazarus.<sup>2976</sup>” (Joh 11:5)

The Bible also says in the same context that Jesus loved (phileo) Lazarus (Joh 11:3, 36).

“Therefore<sup>3767</sup> his sisters<sup>79</sup> sent<sup>649</sup> unto<sup>4314</sup> him,<sup>846</sup> saying,<sup>3004</sup> Lord,<sup>2962</sup> behold,<sup>2396</sup> he whom<sup>3739</sup> thou lovest<sup>5368</sup> is sick.<sup>770</sup>” (Joh 11:3)

“Then<sup>3767</sup> said<sup>3004</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> Jews,<sup>2453</sup> Behold<sup>2396</sup> how<sup>4459</sup> he loved<sup>5368</sup> him!<sup>846</sup>” (Joh 11:36)

Again, we can see here in (Greek) words too plain to deny that “agapao” and “phileo” can be, and are, used interchangeably in the Bible.

5) The Bible says that the Father loveth (agapao) the Son and hath given all things into His hand (Joh 3:35).

“The<sup>3588</sup> Father<sup>3962</sup> loveth<sup>25</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> Son,<sup>5207</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> hath given<sup>1325</sup> all things<sup>3956</sup> into<sup>1722</sup> his<sup>846</sup> hand.<sup>5495</sup>” (Joh 3:35)

Jesus likewise said that the Father loved (phileo) Him and hath committed all judgment unto Him (Joh 5:20-22).

“For<sup>1063</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> Father<sup>3962</sup> loveth<sup>5368</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> Son,<sup>5207</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> showeth<sup>1166</sup> him<sup>846</sup> all things<sup>3956</sup> that<sup>3739</sup> himself<sup>846</sup> doeth:<sup>4160</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> he will show<sup>1166</sup> him<sup>846</sup> greater<sup>3187</sup> works<sup>2041</sup> than these,<sup>5130</sup> that<sup>2443</sup> ye<sup>5210</sup> may marvel.<sup>2296</sup> 5:21 For<sup>1063</sup> as<sup>5618</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> Father<sup>3962</sup> raiseth up<sup>1453</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> dead,<sup>3498</sup> and<sup>2532</sup> quickeneth<sup>2227</sup> them; even so<sup>3779</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> Son<sup>5207 (2532)</sup> quickeneth<sup>2227</sup> whom<sup>3739</sup> he will.<sup>2309</sup> 5:22 For<sup>1063 (3761)</sup> the<sup>3588</sup> Father<sup>3962</sup> judgeth<sup>2919</sup> no man,<sup>3762</sup> but<sup>235</sup> hath committed<sup>1325</sup> all<sup>3956</sup> judgment<sup>2920</sup> unto the<sup>3588</sup> Son.<sup>5207</sup>” (Joh 5:20-22)

Again, we can see here in (Greek) words too plain to deny that “agapao” and “phileo” can be, and are, used interchangeably in the Bible.

I hope that it is now clear that Joh 21:15-17 is not mistranslated in the KJV and that “agapao” and “phileo” can be, and are, used interchangeably in the Bible, and that furthermore, the definition of the English word for “love” includes the definitions for both “agapao” and “phileo.”