

In this verse "the kingdom of our God" is a specific reference to God's rule, and TEV has translated: "Now God has shown his power as king!" Barclay translates the entire clause "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God" with the meaning "Now our God has won the victory; now God has displayed his power and his sovereignty." GN translates "the kingdom of our God" as "Now God has shown his kingly power!"

Revelation 17.12: And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast.

The RSV text "not yet received royal power" is literally "who have not yet received a kingdom". The meaning of the text is as RSV has rendered it, and it comes out in GN as: "The ten horns which you have seen are ten kings who have not yet assumed their rule." In TEV it is rendered: "The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet begun to rule."

Revelation 17.17: for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and giving over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

In this verse "kingdom" means "royal power", as indicated in the RSV. TEV renders: "their power to rule".

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"THE KINGDOM OF GOD" IN LUKE

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In his article in *The Bible Translator*, October 1974, Barclay Newman has pointed out that the primary meaning of "kingdom of God" is "God's kingly rule". This article looks at various renderings of the phrase in a draft translation of Luke's Gospel into the Gurung language, showing how different contexts have determined the choice of rendering. The renderings fall into four main groupings:

1. God's power at work in the world,
2. the personal response to God, in obedience and receiving blessing,
3. God's future open ruling of the world,
4. the ultimate blessings of God's rule in heaven.

1. GOD'S POWER AT WORK

Under the phrase "kingdom of God" Jesus taught his disciples what God is like, what kind of king he is, and what kind of rule he exercises. In his helpful study on the meaning of the phrase (*The Plain Man Looks at the Lord's Prayer*,

pages 63–77) William Barclay says: “To be a member of the Kingdom of God necessarily involves acceptance of the will of God” (page 65). The focus in some contexts is clearly that the kingdom of God has been brought in through the person and work of Jesus, “the one and only person who ever fully accepted and fully carried out the will of God” (page 66). Thus the least disciple of Jesus is more blessed than John the Baptizer.

7.28 RSV: Among those born of women none is greater than John: yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

Gurung: John is the greatest of all people. Even though he is, whoever, *after seeing my deeds and hearing my words, obeys God according to what I say, even though that person be small, he will receive greater blessing than John.*

(Note: As it stands, 7.28 appears to be a logical contradiction, if it is assumed that some born of women are in the kingdom of God. The Gurung draft seeks to resolve the contradiction by taking the second “greater” as “greater in privilege/blessing”.)

This interpretation also appears best for the difficult saying in 17.20–21.

17.20–21 RSV: The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, “Lo, here it is!” or “There!” for behold the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.

Gurung: Eye cannot see *when God will rule*. People will not say “Look, the *kingdom of God* is here!” or “There it is!” because the *kingdom of God* is right now in front of you. Seeing the deeds *God is doing through me* you can understand that God is king.

The fact that it was the Pharisees to whom Jesus was speaking would appear to rule out the interpretation “the kingdom of God is within you” (meaning “in your heart”, see Jerusalem Bible, NEB, *Translator’s Handbook on Luke* page 586, as against Phillips, TEV, NIV, Living Bible, KJV). It was “in the midst of” the Pharisees in the person of Jesus himself. The last sentence in the Gurung rendering is put in partly to counter a wrong interpretation to which Buddhist Gurung readers lean: “The kingdom of God is in Jesus, and the people, and the animals, and everything.” More literal renderings are adopted at the beginning of Jesus’ reply, and in the Pharisees’ question in verse 20 (“From when will God rule?”) since Jesus in his answer explains the term and leads the questioners from one idea of the kingdom, as the open revealing of God’s rule, to another—the operation of God in the world through his ruling in the lives of individual people.

God’s power at work through Jesus is also the focus in 11.20.

11.20 RSV: But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Gurung: But since I drive out demons by the hand of God you should know that *God’s power* has come among you.

In the mission of the disciples, they demonstrated “God’s kingly rule” in healing the sick.

10.9 RSV: The kingdom of God has come near to you.

Gurung: You have had the opportunity to see God's powerful works.

The similar saying to the unresponsive towns (10.11) is rendered in the same sort of way in Gurung. (The Greek text omits "to you" here, but this is supplied in, for example, the TEV.)

In 9.62, also, the intended channel of God's power is a disciple, but he is found unfit (see the German common language translation, *Die Gute Nachricht*: "him God can't use when he is completing his work").

9.62 RSV: No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.

Gurung: In ploughing, if anyone, after seizing the handle, turns and keeps looking back, that person is of no use *when God is doing his work*.

Since the phrase "the secrets of the kingdom of God" (8.10 RSV) occurs in a passage introducing the explanation of the sower as describing God's word at work in the lives of men, it is rendered in Gurung as "the hidden words of the way God works".

Likewise, in introducing the parables teaching its power of growth and its wide influence, "the kingdom of God" (13.18, 20 RSV) has been rendered "God's way of working in the world".

2. PERSONAL RESPONSE

When the kingdom of God is proclaimed the primary response called for on the part of hearers is obedience. But membership in the kingdom does not end with obligation—blessing follows. Thus our Lord spoke of the kingdom in terms of a great feast in 14.16–24 (Barclay page 67). Since for the typical Gurung villager words such as "king" and "rule" denote a remote authority (few have ever seen the king, or even visited the national capital), an expanded rendering has been chosen describing the consequences for the individual of "God's kingly rule". So, the two components of man's submission to God's rule and God's blessing upon man are expressed clearly in contexts involving the proclamation of the kingdom, such as 4.43.

4.43 RSV: I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God.

Gurung: I must declare the good news saying, "*God is about to rule. Obey him, and he will give you blessing.*"

The same rendering is used in 8.1; 9.2, 11, 60; and 16.16. The verb translated "obey" implies submission and honouring, whether to parents or others in authority, or to a god.

In 12.31 only obedience is expressed in words, as the remainder of the verse speaks of blessing; in 12.32 the two components are both expressed.

12.31, 32 RSV: Instead, seek his kingdom and these things shall be yours as well.

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Gurung: Instead, *obey God*, and then you will receive eating, drinking, all things, as well. O my little party, don't be afraid, because God your Father considers it good to *cause you to obey his words and to bless you*.

In the Gurung these verses are made one paragraph together to put verse 32 in context, and together they close the passage on daily cares (12.22–32). This paragraphing follows the German *Die Gute Nachricht* (compare also JB), but most English versions, including RSV, NIV, LB, TEV, and NEB lose the context by making a paragraph break between verses 31 and 32, and grouping 32–34 as one paragraph.

In 18.29, also, only obedience is referred to as the following verse speaks of the blessing.

18.29 RSV: there is no man who has left . . . for the sake of the kingdom of God, who . . .

Gurung: Whatever man, *in order to obey God well*, leaves . . .

Likewise, in the first reference to “kingdom of God” in 18.17 only submission is mentioned in the Gurung as it is the condition for the blessing envisaged in the second part of the verse.

18.17 RSV: whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

Gurung: whoever does not *submit to God* in the way children submit to their parents he will never receive the *full blessing of God*.

In the statements of 18.24, 25 only the component of obedience is in focus.

18.24 RSV: How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God.

Gurung: How difficult it is for a rich man to *submit to God*.

The petition “Thy kingdom come” in the Lord’s prayer (11.2 RSV) is interpreted as parallel to the line before it “Hallowed be thy name”, a petition for all men to acknowledge God as king; and the two lines are rendered:

Father, you are good,
may all men acknowledge you as excellent.
You are a great God,
may all men obey you as king.

This verse leads to the next section in this discussion, as it looks beyond individual personal response to the kingdom to the end of the age when *all men* acknowledge God as king.

3. GOD’S FUTURE OPEN RULE

There are a number of references to the kingdom of God passages about the end time, where the phrase has been rendered as a reference to the time of God’s ruling everywhere.

21.31 RSV: So also, . . . when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

Gurung: . . . the time is about to be when *God will rule everywhere*.

23.51 RSV: he [Joseph of Arimathea] was looking for the kingdom of God.
Gurung: he was looking expectantly for *the time when God would rule everywhere*.

The coming of God's rule is apparently predicted as in the near future in 9.27, but in 19.11 the thought is of delay.

9.27 RSV: there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.

Gurung: Some people among you standing here will not die before they have seen *God ruling everywhere*.

19.11 RSV: he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.

Gurung: people were thinking, "When Jesus reaches the capital city *the time of God's ruling* will probably come." But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, told this story in order to let them understand well about the *time of God's ruling*.

4. HEAVEN

In a number of contexts the blessings promised are future—the phrase "kingdom of God" clearly refers to a feast in heaven, where God is enthroned. (Think, for instance, of the picture of Lazarus "carried to Abraham's side, at the feast in heaven" 16.22 TEV.)

13.28, 29 RSV: There you will weep and gnash your teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out. And men will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God.

Gurung: you will see Abraham . . . sitting *with God in heaven*. . . Men will come . . . and sit at *God's feast in heaven*.

The Gurung draft likewise supplies "heaven" as the missing place word in 13.24—"Strive to enter heaven by the narrow door." Living Bible does this also, but keeps the phrase "kingdom of God" in 13.28, 29.

The parable of the great feast is introduced by 14.15.

14.15 RSV: Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

Gurung: Those who get to eat *God's feast in heaven* will be very happy.

Thus, the context of eating makes it likely that at the Last Supper Jesus was using the phrase "kingdom of God" to refer to the heavenly feast (22.16).

22.16 RSV: I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

Gurung: When people *eat the feast in heaven*, the meaning of this festival will be fulfilled. And until this festival is fulfilled I will not eat its meal.

In the parallel saying over the cup, however, use of the verb “come” (“until the kingdom of God comes” 22.18 RSV) suggests the coming of God’s rule rather than the heavenly feast, and so is rendered in Gurung “until God rules everywhere”. The fact that the two sayings occur together shows the closeness of the two ideas of the coming of God’s rule and the final blessed state in heaven.

6.20 and 18.16, 17 all speak of the privileges of the kingdom.

6.20 RSV: Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Gurung: Blessing has come to you poor people, because since you look to God, he will give you his full blessing.

18.16 RSV: for to such belongs the kingdom of God.

Gurung: because people like these children will receive the full blessing of God (and similarly in 18.17—see section 2 above).

Here “full blessing” has in view, but is not limited to, the ultimate blessing of God in heaven. *A Translator’s Handbook on Luke* focusses on the final blessing in commenting on 18.17 that “to enter the kingdom of God means to share in its blessings at the final consummation” (page 604). Regarding the present tense of the verb in the Sermon on the Mount, Newman notes for Matthew 5.3 (which is parallel to Luke 6.20) that “it is possible to take the present with a future force” and so render it with a future. But a present blessing is seen here by some interpreters, especially in view of 18.29 where Jesus promises his disciples that even though they have left all and followed him they will have *in this age* many times more.

CONCLUSION

In almost every case the Gurung rendering is considerably longer than the phrase in RSV, and brings out the meaning far more plainly. But is this not necessary? “It is quite certain that the Kingdom of God was the central message and proclamation of Jesus” (Barclay, page 63), yet it has remained a puzzle to many people with centuries of Christian heritage and the benefit of years of preaching and teaching. It is more than time for translators to grapple with this central message of Jesus, all the more so when their prospective readers do not have libraries of commentaries and other theological works to consult.

However some translators feel something of a problem in dealing with the phrase “kingdom of God” so as to bring out its meaning plainly. Leon Morris expresses something of this feeling when he says (in a personal letter): “I see no evidence that in the first century ‘the kingdom of God’ was self-explanatory. Obviously the people understood something of what Jesus said. But I don’t think they got it all and I don’t think I get it all. To make a definite translation every time stops people wondering what is meant, and they may be meant to wonder. On the other hand I see that the modern Gurung would not do their wondering in quite the same way as the first century men to whom Jesus spoke and for whom Luke wrote . . . I simply share with you my hesitation about simplification. This is good, but it can easily pass over into over-simplification”.

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TRANSLATING BIBLICAL MEASUREMENTS

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This article has been written having in mind the problems and needs of translators working in Australia and the South Pacific area. A number of those translators are already applying the suggestions made here in their work. For other parts of the world there may be some suggestions here which translators might not wish to apply in their situation.

We invite readers to send in comments and suggestions on this topic which may be published in a future issue.—Editor.

There are many references to money, weights, and measures in the Bible. We meet them as part of the text we are trying to translate, and we cannot translate well without dealing with them in a meaningful way.

Translators often find biblical measurements difficult to translate. There are various reasons for this. One is that there are problems in understanding what the different words used really stand for. Another is that it is not always easy to decide on the best equivalents to use for the biblical terms in the translation. In this short article we will consider some of the problems translators face, and suggest an approach to handling measurements which should help in producing meaningful translation.

A general principle

When we translate we try to produce the closest natural equivalent of the original message in the language of our readers. Our aim is to give our readers as clear an understanding of the message as those who first heard it or read it.