



How do you understand this Bible verse?

Greetings from the “end of the world”!

In July 2004 the Nenets received their first book of the Bible, the Gospel of Luke. In this issue we focus on the people and the work of translating into Nenets.

Last spring our Korean colleague, Eunsub, suffered an accident on a snowmobile when out in the tundra in northern Siberia to test the translation of Mark's Gospel in Nenets. After three and a half months in Korea for medical treatment she is now back in Salekhard, the capital of Yamalo-Nenetsia. “I am so pleased to be back,” she wrote. “It is wonderful to see what is happening here in Yamal, which means ‘end of the world’ in Nenets.”

She recalled those snowy days in March when she went to the Bilayarskaya tundra. She had been longing to experience Nenets life in the tundra in order to understand their culture and language better, and so she welcomed her friend Tasya's invitation to her relatives' winter tents.

“On the way to Bilayarsk our van had stuck in snow three times, and I fell off my seat more than ten times! While Tolik and Dima, the pastor and missionary of the local church, were digging snow, I enjoyed a huge emerald green and blue aurora for the first time in my life. It played like an orchestra in the dark sky.”

Nenets life in wintertime

“I've tasted quite a bit of Nenets winter life, chopping trees, cutting ice for drinking water, sewing Nenets traditional dress and also eating frozen reindeer meat. It was also fun to ride on a reindeer sled...but not on the snowmobile!” she added.

She waited to test the translation of Mark's Gospel until the Nenets returned to Bilayarsk from the tundra, since she realised how busy life could be out there. “Thank

God that their feedback was more active, with suggestions, than last summer.”

How could I live without faith in God?

“There were many things I enjoyed, but it was the people in the tundra that impressed me the most.” The tents of Tasya and her sister, Nadya, were side by side. “The two families gathered at night to listen to the tape, *Stories about Jesus*.* It was wonderful to gather on Sunday to have a family service, reading our little book, *Stories about Jesus*, and singing Nenets Christian songs.” Nadya’s husband had many questions about the Bible. When Eunsub asked him if he believed in God, he replied: “How can I live without believing in God?”

* *Stories about Jesus* is an illustrated booklet published in Nenets by IBT in 2003.

Travelling for hours for a copy of Stories about Jesus

Before Eunsub went to Bilayarsk she had given two copies with tapes of *Stories about Jesus* to two women from Shuchi at the Nenets church in Salekhard. When they returned home they gathered their neighbours to play the tape and read the book together. “When Tasya’s younger sister, Masha, heard that I was coming to Bilayarsk, she came from the tundra, riding on a reindeer sled for several hours, to get the book with the tape



We are listening to *Stories about Jesus*!

of *Stories about Jesus*. When she saw me, she hugged me and jumped with excitement! She bought a tape recorder that day and returned back to the tundra happy and satisfied.”

Luke’s Gospel published in Nenets at last!

After a long wait Luke’s Gospel has finally been published in Nenets. For the Nenets people this is their first book of the Bible. “We thank God for the book, beautifully printed with maps and glossaries at the back. It will be a great help for the Nenets, both those living in the tundra and those in the villages.”



The publication of Luke’s Gospel has been a fresh inspiration to our translator, Anna, who has been finding it tough going. She is now prepared to continue work on Mark’s Gospel. Please pray for physical health and spiritual protection as she and Eunsub continue to work together.

The Nenets have snow up to 260 days a year

Facts about the Nenets

Population:	40,000 approximately
Language:	Nenets
Language group:	Samoyed
Location:	Northwest Siberia, Yamalo-Nenetsia in Tyumen region, capital Salekhard; and Nenetsia in Arkhangelsk region, capital Naryan-Mar; also the Kola Peninsula.
Religion:	Orthodox Christianity, with a strong animist influence; a growing number of evangelical Christians.
Bible:	Extracts from Luke's Gospel (1995) <i>Stories about Jesus</i> booklet and audio cassette (2003) Luke's Gospel (2004)



"Rock-a-bye, baby..."

"Real people"

The word "Nenets" means "real person". The Nenets are the most numerous of the Samoyed ethnic groups. They live in the Arctic region in northeast Europe and northwest Siberia, from the Kanin Peninsula on the White Sea to the Yenisei Delta. They also inhabit the Kola Peninsula and islands in the Arctic Ocean. Their environment in the permafrost zone consists of tundra and forest, numerous rivers and vast marshy areas. The climate is severe, with snow for up to 260 days a year and temperatures below minus 50 degrees in winter.

Many live as nomads

The Nenets' main means of support is reindeer herding. Many still live as nomads. Since time immemorial the nomadic life of the Nenets has been tied to the reindeer's

need for pasture and they have adapted to life in the tundra. The reindeer provide the Nenets with meat for food and hides for clothing and tents. Hunting and fishing are other means of support. In more recent times pollution from the chemical and oil industries have greatly damaged the Nenets' environment. Alcoholism is widespread.

Many different words for snow

The Nenets language is closely related to Nganasan and Enets. Since the population is so scattered there are a great many dialects. The language is especially rich when it comes to nature and weather conditions: for example, there are many different words for snow. The same applies to reindeer herding, hunting and fishing.

Several groups of Nenets Christians

Christianity reached the Nenets in the 19th century via the Russian Orthodox Church's missionaries, and there were mass baptisms. But the Nenets still cling to many pre-Christian traditions and customs. There are now several groups of Nenets Christians who are using the published bible texts in their services and looking forward to receiving their first New Testament.



Children in the tundra learn to read Nenets from the outset

Translation work continues

The translation of the New Testament into Nenets in cooperation with Wycliffe/SIL gained pace in 2001 when three exegetical checkers moved to the region. In addition, the team comprises a translator, a translation consultant and a coordinator. In contrast to Luke's Gospel

which was translated by a Nenets linguist in St Petersburg, Mark's Gospel is being translated by Nenets people living their traditional life on the spot and by text checkers who have learned the language. This guarantees a better understanding of the text, but so far the work has made slow progress. A matter for prayer is to find one more translator for the team.

Project of the month

For an ethnic group to have the New Testament in their language is not only a spiritual blessing but it also shows that their language is important and worthy of use. Support the ongoing translation work in Nenets with your gift to this month's project.

IBT publications June-September 2004

Luke's Gospel in Nenets	2,650
Jesus, Friend of Children in Russian (reprint)	40,150
New Testament in Ossetic	5,000
John's Gospel, the Letters of John and Revelation in Khakass	3,000

Institute for Bible Translation

Institute for Bible Translation was founded in Stockholm, Sweden in 1973, its main task being to publish Bibles for "non-Slavic peoples in Slavic countries." In the CIS 130 different languages are spoken. Since then we have worked on Bible translation in more than 80 of these languages. We have printed the Bible or portions of it in over 60 languages, including three whole Bibles, in Georgian, Moldavian and Tajik, and 18 New Testaments. We welcome your support for our continuing efforts in bringing the Word to those in the former Soviet nations. All peoples of the world should have the Bible available in their native language.

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