

# The Herald Of Christ's Kingdom

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Bible Study

## Editors' Journal

*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.—2 Timothy 3:16, 17*

When the Christian first commits his life unto God he has the desire which Jesus had at his baptism, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7-9). The balance of the Christian life is spent in trying to determine what that will is.

The Apostle Paul discusses this subject in detail in the twelfth chapter of Romans. In the first verse he urges consecration: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

In the second verse he follows through by showing that the determination of God's will involves a renewing of the mind: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

This will then involve the determination of the Christian in the role God wishes him to fill. Thus Paul continues in verse three with the concept of evaluation: "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

After discussing the diversity of operations in the body of Christ in verses four through eight, he completes the chapter with practical applications of the principles of Christian living.

## A Life of Study

With such a task ahead of him, it is little wonder that the admonition is penned: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

The word study in this verse would be better translated as diligent, showing that it is not only the accumulation of knowledge Paul is encouraging but the application of that knowledge in a vital Christian life of service to his God and to his Savior, Jesus Christ.

This issue of **THE HERALD** is devoted to this topic of studying to determine the will of God. It is based on the premise that the only sure foundation for Christian living is the word of God, the Bible.

The opening treatise examines the relationship of study, devotion, and service. It is entitled *Balance in the Christian Walk* and shows the necessity of all three elements in a well rounded Christian life. Both proper devotion and proper service are based on an intellectual affirmation of the priority of God's will in one's life. Study becomes essential to the determination of that will.

The second article, *The Importance of Study*, may appear to address an obvious theme; but the author looks at study in four distinct areas—doctrine, prophecy, service, and divine principles.

*Some Thoughts on Bible Study*, acknowledges that the Bible is hard to understand. Written by a variety of authors over a period exceeding two thousand years and in a minimum of two ancient languages, it would be amazing if it were easy to comprehend. The author discusses various principles that will help the diligent student in his search for truth from this amazing and inspired book.

A tract on Bible study, originally published by the New Albany (IN) Bible Students has been condensed for the next article, entitled *How to Study the Bible*.

Honest, sincere, and highly educated scholars have disagreed over the meaning of many Bible passages. Inconsistencies between ancient manuscripts and a wide variance between translators of the Bible raise the question, How can I know which Bible is best? In a detailed and analytical study this very question is probed in the deeply-researched article, *How to Choose a Bible Translation*. We have devoted a large portion of this issue to this article because of the importance of the subject and the thorough research that went into its writing.

Not only do various translations vie for our attention but different approaches to the manner of Bible study are also frequently urged. Some students contend strongly for a verse by verse approach to the scriptures, while others prefer a topical method of study, often using various topical study guides as an aid. These two approaches are evaluated in the treatise, *Precept Upon Precept*, which discusses the advantages of each method.

A biblical example of the topical method of study is explored through a verse by verse study in the first chapter of Hebrews. The subject of that chapter is *The Preeminence of Christ* and a study of the chapter not only illuminates that theme but also gives important insights into the apostles' approach to Bible study and the New Testament use of Old Testament quotations.

Our desire is that this issue not only be an assistance to each of us in gaining more from our studies of the Lord's word but that it also be an incentive to more diligent study. Such study, however, is not the end of our goal. The purpose of the study is to enable us to each live a life more pleasing to our heavenly Father and more to his glory.

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:..."—James 1:22, 23

Study, Devotion, and Service

## Balance In The Christian Walk

*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.—Acts 2:42*

*Allen Coffman*

The Lord expects each of us to live up to his or her consecration with a full commitment of all our talents and resources—all of our time and energy—our ALL! We have made a complete and unreserved commitment and the challenge now is to determine what areas will best aid and direct the development of our new creature in Jesus Christ. The three areas we look at here are necessary for that development. In properly developing these areas we hope to be well pleasing to our heavenly Father and make our "calling and election sure."

### Study

We are considered to be in the School of Christ—learning to be like him and to walk in his footsteps. One of the main tools that we can use is the study of the word of God. Where else do we find an understanding of what is proper and what is improper—what is true doctrine and what is false doctrine. Isaiah 28 refers to a class of individuals who have considered improperly the lessons contained in scripture:

"But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment" (Isa. 28:7).

The specific allegation here is to teachers who, through imbibing wrong doctrine, have lost their way. The same principle, however, applies to all the consecrated. If indeed we do not have a strong, proper doctrinal stand, how can we possibly maintain a proper vision—apropos balance? How can we possibly make proper judgments in our daily walk?

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

Only in this way is it possible to approach the state for which we are striving. If we do not know the doctrines, then how can we expect to be able to conform our lives, our direction, our choices to the vision. There are many "good" individuals in the world, individuals that sacrifice for others and are devoted to a life of righteous living. But do they have the correct vision? Do they know what it is they are striving to accomplish? Do they know that the kingdom is the only answer to the problems that we see in the world?

Correct doctrine is very important and should lead us to an informed course of action for our new creature. Interestingly, the word "study" in 2 Timothy 2:15 is Strong's 4704. We gain further insight into its meaning when we see its usage in the following scriptures: "Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Heb. 4:11); "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Peter 3:14).

These translations highlighted in the two texts imply that we must labor in the assimilation of the principles of righteousness and be diligent in our efforts to always seek his will according to scriptural principles. This diligence will involve both study and application.

Testing will come to us, trials and at times tribulation. Therefore "Study to show thyself approved,"—study the doctrine, study your course of conduct, keep it in harmony with the doctrine. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Heb. 2:1). We can maintain the harmony in our Christian walk if we keep our doctrine pure.

## **Devotion**

This subject reminds us of the story of Mary, anointing the feet of Jesus, and the beautiful relationship shown there for us. Here is a picture of pure devotion—true sacrifice to our Lord Jesus.

We do not have our Lord Jesus here in the flesh with us—we cannot literally pour the sweet smelling ointment upon him. But what of his feet members? Surely there is an opportunity for each of us, if we look, to pour out a blessing on one of these. He assures us he will count it as if it were done unto him. "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:40).

One of our admonitions is to anoint one another's feet—to be of comfort. Mary had a deep, loving, benevolent heart which delighted in sacrifices and was deeply sympathetic. In our ministrations to our brethren, remember that they may be in need of many things—some have need of love; some of sympathy; some of companionship; and some of understanding. Our alabaster boxes are our hearts. They must be broken to put forth the sweet perfume of good wishes, kindness, and love toward all.

How can we be like Mary? The fragrance in our alabaster boxes does no good unless it is used to benefit others. We receive a feeling of uplift when a kind act is done. We can savor the aroma of it and our hearts are full as we are privileged to bless. The warning remains, however, that we should not tarry for "Flowers on the casket cast no fragrance upon the one inside."

"She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying" (Mark 14:8). In addition, we remember that Mary loved to sit at the feet of Jesus to learn of his teachings. We see then by her example that devotion is very important but it is not enough. A proper balance must include a proper proportion of both devotion and study.

Wise counsel along these lines is found in *The New Creation*, page 319:

"Growth in knowledge is very liable to detract from devotion—strange as it may appear—if attention be energetically directed in one channel, it is apt to lead to dwarfing in other directions. The Christian is not to be all head and no heart. . . The spirit of a sound mind directs us to cultivate all the fruits and graces which go to round out and complete a perfect character."

"Balance" is required so that one area does not overpower another. We must constantly attend and test our attitude so that we can be aware of any tendency to move too far in any one direction and to correct that tendency when it is found. Service

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12). "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).

These scriptures provide us with a framework to regulate and balance our approach to service, not only to those in the world but also to those whom we call brethren. Service is always appropriate and these scriptures provide a built-in order of priority. They show the importance of attending to the household of faith now—understanding that the world in general will, in the future, benefit from the glorification of the church and the inauguration of the New Covenant with the nation of Israel.

The golden rule has provided mankind a general direction of conduct that in previous years has served them well. Lately, however, it seems that the rule has been changed to "Do unto others before they have a chance to do it unto you." This is a sign of our times and a perversion of the principle of righteousness.

"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; ..." (1 Tim. 3:2). We can see by this scripture that hospitality is also a very important part of service. Why else would it be included in the attributes to seek when electing elders. This admonition is not, however, limited to servants. "Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality" (Rom. 12:13). All are included in this admonition—a proper attitude of service to our brethren.

If our devotion is strong, we will seek to curtail, to the extent possible, within reasonable economic limits the demands of the family and especially the demands of self. In this way we will have all the more to lay upon the altar of sacrifice in service to our brethren and to the cause of present truth.

## **Balance is the Answer**

"Study—Devotion—Service" three portions of a consecrated walk. There are only 24 hours in a day—how should that time be divided —what should we do first, second and third: should I tract today, should I fix that leaky roof, should I contact those new customers, should I study that text, should I send that note to Sister X? We have so many demands on our time; what is the proper course? The Lord expects us to make decisions in our consecrated walks now—so that our characters and the decision making processes will be strengthened and we will become practiced in making decisions based upon scriptural principles.

Many in the service of the truth are continually pressing toward the mark. How does their seemingly endless activity make us feel? Does our conscience nag us at every turn, and do we feel ashamed that we do not do more in the service? Then brethren, we must look to the choices we are making in our daily walk. There are times when we must concentrate on the things of the earth—to make a living and to provide shelter for our families. What of the rest of the time—do we use it to the best spiritual benefit or not, and how do we judge ourselves?

The following scriptures provide one test:

"Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God" (1 John 3:21). This is the best spiritual condition. If the heart is right then we are right. If our conscience is clear and we have presented the matter before the Lord, then we can be assured that even if the decision we have made turns out to be wanting it is the best that we could do.

On the other hand the following verse may apply: "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things" (1 John 3:20).

Our Lord understands our frame and cares for us. As we seek to do his will more perfectly each day—in the ecclesia studies, in our devotional time, and in the service of the Master, we will at times fall short. The flesh is imperfect. God is greater than our heart—he understands and forgives us if only we ask and continue to strive our best. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

What is the correct answer of balance in these matters? The real answer is for each consecrated new creature in Christ to apply the scriptural principles to themselves. Ask these questions as often as necessary: Am I devoting a sufficient amount of time to study? Am I spending a sufficient amount of time in devotion? Do I use my time wisely in the service of my brethren? Is my heart right and does it approve of what I am doing? Is my Christian walk in balance or is it out of balance?

Balance In The Ecclesia—In the Home—And at Work

The ecclesia, the home, and our place of employment are all very important places to strive for balance. We are subjected to some of our most important testings here and should seek to apply the principles of righteousness at every opportunity. The following scripture provides a framework for a proper balance in the ecclesia and in the other areas that will be considered in this article. It may also provide a clue as to how the relationship BETWEEN these areas may be handled. "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17).

This attribute of wisdom is especially desired in obtaining a proper balance of character. Let us review these properties with respect to our own actions, thoughts, and communications with the brethren in our classes—with our family members, both consecrated and unconsecrated—and the ones with whom we work each day.

### **First—Purity**

Webster defines purity as "freedom from adulterating matter." Are we free of hidden agendas that would cloud our judgment in the ecclesia? Are we interested in the development of the new creature in Christ Jesus—or are we more interested in our influence on others? When decisions are discussed, do we submit our preferences in the interest of others, or do we seek our own way in the matter before the ecclesia and call it a principle?

How about the home? The marriage contract involves certain commitments. In a consecrated home the husband and spouse are "equally yoked." Both pull in the same direction. Deciding about the use of time is a much easier matter when the same goals are instilled in each of the partners. Even in the introduction of children into the relationship there is more consistency in judgment and a mutual understanding.

How about the consecrated brother or sister who does not have a consecrated spouse? Time demands are certain to become a matter of conflict—how are these and other situations resolved? It becomes a matter not so easily addressed and often results in compromise.

The workplace provides an additional challenge to the purity of a consecrated child of God. We have seen an increasing pressure over the past 25 years in the business arena to "look the other way," and to do that which will be good for the profitability of the company at the expense of honesty and personal integrity, "purity." In some instances this has resulted in the loss of employment on the basis of disloyalty, or the false accusation of an uncooperative attitude. It is so important for one to be true to the purity that is in his heart—especially in these matters and in these times.

"He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation."—Psalm 24:4, 5



## **Second**—Peaceable, Gentle and Easy to be Entreated

These are admirable traits to possess in the ecclesia. Do we have these characteristics or are we abrasive, tactless, aloof, and condescending due to the fact we have been in the truth so long—have so much knowledge—so much insight—and are we sure that the best possible course of action is our own? The control of these character traits are more difficult for some than others. Psychologists tell us that there are four primary types of individuals, ranging from very dominant to very passive. It is relatively easy for the passive individual to conform to these types because they run along the natural lines of the personality—but for the naturally aggressive person it is quite another matter. Does this mean then that we should all be passive?

"And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17) It appears that our Lord had two with him who were not so gentle—at least at first. We should expect then to encounter all sorts of individuals in the ecclesia arrangement—each striving to obtain that Christlike character—forceful yet peaceable; strong yet gentle; convinced yet easy to be entreated.

Marriage offers an arrangement which provides ample opportunity to practice these attributes. It is all too easy to allow bad feelings and words to build walls between husband and wife. If left standing, these walls become cemented and require considerable effort to remove—if indeed they can be removed at all. Business, like marriage, requires the cooperation of individuals. The same principles apply in the office as in the home—listening, hearing, and understanding.

## **Third**—Full of Mercy and Good Fruits

How do we treat those whom we believe have wronged us? Is our demeanor still one of love and respect or do we avoid a look, a contact; or worse yet, do we ignore them? The old man would like us to keep our distance, hold that grudge or speak evil. We must put off the old man. "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Eph. 4:22).

As new creatures in Christ Jesus the feelings of that old man must be put off. We must put those things behind and show mercy at every opportunity.

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." (Col. 3:12, 13).

This follows especially in the arrangement in the home. Understanding the weaknesses and strengths of your mate is a necessary step in the process of developing mercy but only one half of the equation. Understanding our own weaknesses and strengths and thinking about these completes the circle. Know when you are prone to be unmerciful.

Restrain the casual and abrupt reaction to the actions and words of your spouse. Consider the implications of your actions and words before they are spoken (1 Cor. 9:27).

Mercy and good works are proper also in the workplace. Here we deal with those in the world. Sometimes it is difficult to live with the words and actions we see. We want to change the motives and actions of these people to conform to that which will be only possible in the Kingdom of God on the earth. The blinding influence of Satan must be removed—the blinding influence WILL BE REMOVED in the inaugurated Kingdom and not before. This is all the more reason to remember that we are to show mercy and good works even now. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10).

#### **Fourth**—Without Partiality and Without Hypocrisy

"I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality" (1 Tim. 5:21).

Strong's defines partiality as "showing favoritism" a "leaning towards." This implies justice in our dealings with others in the ecclesia, in the home, and in our place of employment, fair and impartial treatment of all we come in contact with. This statement brings to mind the picture of justice—her arm outstretched with true balances awaiting the verdict. Jehovah loves a true balance (Prov. 11:1). We, as representatives, must hold his principle of impartiality close to us in all of our affairs.

We must avoid becoming an "actor under an assumed character," a hypocrite. "Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye" (Luke 6:42). How important it is to be true to our consecration and to the spirit that is within us. "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation" (James 5:12). We must live our consecration—we must act in a manner consistent with the character we are building within us in the new creature —we must seek wisdom in our affairs.

# Some Thoughts on Bible Study

*Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth.—2 Timothy 2:15 ASV*

*R. E. Evans*

All who desire to follow Jesus of Nazareth and have a relationship with their Creator must make a direct and forthright examination of the Bible; not a mere formality of thoughtless reading, but the diligent use of every available means to learn of the instructions set forth by the heavenly Father for his creation.

"Blessed is the man...[whose] delight is in the law of the Jehovah. And on his law he doth meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season...whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psa. 1:1-3 ASV).

Before such an examination can be fruitful, however, an adequate answer must be made to the question, "Is the Bible, as it is available today, the true, unadulterated, message of the Creator?"

## **Manuscripts**

In his second letter to Timothy the Apostle Paul wrote, "Every scripture inspired of God [*theopneustos*, Strong's #2315] is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16 ASV).

The literal meaning of the Greek word translated "inspired of God" is breathed out by God. Paul did not write "inspired," he wrote expired, or exhaled. To Paul there was no question as to the origin or source of scripture. The words of the Bible were God-exhaled.

The Apostle Peter shared Paul's belief: "For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but holy men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21 ASV). Thus, we may have confidence the original writings were given under divine control.

There is no similar assurance such control continued to be exerted as the words were passed down through the generations. In fact, a number of scriptures strongly imply such overruling was neither intended nor accomplished. [See Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18, 19. If God had determined that changes to the inspired records could not be introduced, the warnings found in these texts would have been unnecessary.]

The student, therefore, is placed in a difficult position. Though the Bible was first recorded under divine guidance, no original manuscripts containing the God-exhaled words are known to exist. The earliest extant records date from the second century B.C. for the Old Testament, and the second through fourth centuries after Christ for the New

Testament. That these records are not perfect copies of the original is readily evident by the variations found in them.

## **Translation**

Even if the manuscripts had been passed down without error, there still remains the problem of translation. Careful students know that the book they use is printed in a language unknown at the time the original words were spoken and written. So, the accuracy of translation is a vital issue.

It is impossible to make a concise and perfect rendering of any extended writing of another language. If all peoples of the earth possessed exactly the same set of ideas, expressed in exactly the same manner, using one never-changing word for each division of thought, the work of translating would be easy. But such is not the case. It may require several English words to cover all that is contained in one word found in the Hebrew or Greek manuscripts and, conversely, one English word may cover several Hebrew or Greek words.

## **Repetition**

One simple example of the difficulties faced when translating is that of repetition. In modern English writing repetition is avoided by using synonymous words. If done when translating, however, it may cause doubt and uncertainty, if not obscurity. This is a particular problem where a word is used in a figurative or metaphoric sense.

The translators of the King James Version (Authorized Version) often fell prey to this snare, but did not see it as a deficiency. On the contrary, they took pride in their non-uniformity. In their preface, entitled *The Translators to the Reader*, they wrote:

"Another thing we think good to admonish thee of, gentle Reader, that we have not tied ourselves to an uniformity of phrasing, or to an identity of words, as some peradventure wish we had done—that we should express the same notion in the same particular word: as for example, if we translate the Hebrew or Greek word once by ‘purpose,’ never to call it ‘intent’; if one were ‘journeying,’ never ‘travelling’; if one where ‘think,’ never ‘suppose;’ if one where ‘pain,’ never ‘ache;’ if one where ‘joy,’ never ‘gladness;’ etc.. Thus, to mince the matter, we thought to savor more of curiosity than wisdom, and that rather it would breed scorn in the atheist, than profit to the godly reader. For is the kingdom of God become words and syllables? Why should we be in bondage to them, if we may be free?" (*The Translators to the Reader*, KJV).

Unfortunately, this preface is not included in the modern editions of the KJV; so, most readers today are unaware of the liberties taken by the translators of King James. It would have been much better if they had been more strictly literal, even though they may have been charged with producing monotonous repetition.

It is the true modern taste prefers a change in sound, but sometimes force and power, as well as accuracy, are sacrificed for its achievement. A case in point may be found in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians.

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort [*paraklesis*, #3874]; who comforteth [*parakaleo*, #3870] us in all our tribulation that we may be able to comfort [#3870] them which are in any trouble, by the comfort [#3874] wherewith we ourselves are comforted [#3870] of God" (2 Cor. 1:3, 4 KJV).

Here the translators tired of the repetition; not so the Apostle. He had not yet extracted all the comfort out of the blessed word:

"For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation [#3874] also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation [#3874] and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted [#3870], it is for your consolation [#3874] and salvation. And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings so shall ye be also of the consolation [#3874]" (2 Cor. 1:5-7 KJV).

The use of the synonym consolation dramatically attenuates the passion in Paul's thought. It would have been better had the translators followed the Apostle's lead.

Another example is found in our Lord's parable of the marriage feast (Matt. 22:2-14). The King James translators chose to use both call and bid to render the Greek *kaleo*, #2564. In so doing they disregarded the unique meaning often given this word by the inspired writers in such texts as: ". . . and whom he foreordained, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom. 8:30 ASV); and ". . . they . . . that are with him, called, and chosen, and faithful" (Rev. 17:14 ASV).

The use of the word bid in the parable obscures its linkage to these and similar texts and to that special meaning. As shown by the concluding thought, the lesson of the parable depends on this singular application of call ". . . many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. 22:14 ASV).

So, the use of bid divorces much of the parable from its concluding thought. This results in confusion and misunderstanding. With such evidence before them, then, the students of the Bible dare not let down their guard.

## **King James Version**

Non-uniformity in rendering a given word is not the only difficulty with the KJV. Its overall position is tellingly summarized in the *Preface* of the Revised Standard Version:

". . . the King James has grave defects. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the development of biblical studies and the discovery of many manuscripts more ancient than those upon which the King James was based, made it manifest that these defects are so many and so serious as to call for revision of the English translation. . . . The King James Version of the New Testament was based upon a Greek text that was marred by mistakes, containing the accumulated errors of fourteen centuries of manuscript copying" (*Preface*, RSV).

Thus the student must be diligent when using the King James Version.

## **Other Translations**

But what of the other translations? Is there not one that may be used in confidence? To seek an answer, let us turn to another preface, that found in the New English Bible. There the translators declared:

"We have conceived our task to be that of understanding the original as precisely as we could (using all available aids), and then saying again in our native idiom what we believed the author to be saying in his. We have found that in practice this frequently compelled us to make decisions where the older method of translation allowed a comfortable ambiguity. In such places we have been aware that we take a risk, but we have thought it our duty to take the risk rather than to remain on the fence" (Introduction to the New Testament, NEB). [Author's emphasis.]

Instead of leaving ambiguities students could resolve for themselves, the translators felt compelled to take a risk and to make decisions. How much greater risk do students take when they read this translation and accept its rendering without question!

With every translation a similar problem exists. We must be ever alert, otherwise we may learn the words of the creature and not those of the Creator.

## **Guidance**

What is the student to do? Is the task impossible? No! It is difficult, but not impossible. Paul provided the guidance: ". . . prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5:21 ASV); "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15 ASV).

In the last text the phrase "handling aright" (rightly dividing in the King James) comes from the Greek *orthotomeo* [#3719], which means "to cut straight," "to dissect correctly."

**BASELINE OF HARMONY:** The cutting straight of the Bible is not achieved in a single stroke but gradually, bit by bit. Each small advance of truth must be proved. The student must dissect correctly each new thought and weigh it against a baseline of harmony.

The proving of a thought can only be accomplished by a careful comparison of all that the Bible contains concerning it. The truth should never be assumed as long as there is a single passage that apparently contradicts or is out of harmony with other passages, or if the thought is inconsistent with God's character. Contradiction, inconsistency, and discord are all signs of misunderstanding and, possibly, error.

The Bible must be and is, when rightly understood, one harmonious whole. It could never teach that which any portion of it contradicts. Neither could it teach that which is not in harmony with God's attributes. The perfect correspondence of every statement of scripture with respect to any subject is the only proof of the correctness of an interpretation. It is the best guard we have against the error that may be introduced through faulty manuscripts and poor translation.

**GOD'S CHARACTER:** To establish and use this baseline of harmony it is necessary to know of God's character. As the designer and creator of all that we perceive, God ordered and established the laws of nature; laws whose beauty and consistency of operation we see and admire. Let human reason do its best to trace known facts to a known and competent cause; but, back of it all stands an omnipotent God—" . . . Because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things which are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse: . . ." (Rom. 1:19, 20 ASV).

To perceive the power of God will result in dread of that omnipotence unless he can be seen also to possess benevolence and goodness. Without such counterbalance his creation would live in constant fear. That there is such balance we are fully assured through the same evidence that proves his power.

Not only does reason force the conclusion that there is a God, and that his power is incalculable beyond that of his creation, it also forces the conclusion that the creature is not superior to the Creator. The greatest manifestation of benevolence and love in the creation must be inferior to that of God, even as is its power.

There are those who do not accept the presumption of a merciful and loving God. They insist the Bible presents an entirely different picture. Their god is a god of wrath and vengeance. Those who take such a position fail to realize they are in effect saying the creature is superior to the Creator. If fallen humanity can establish systems that govern by laws based on mercy; if fallen humanity can realize that retribution does not have to be commensurate to the crime (many countries today no longer practice capital punishment); if fallen humanity can feel compassion for those who are dispossessed through no fault of their own, but because of race, color, inherited inability, deformity, etc.; then, should we not expect the same, if not much more, from God? In the coming kingdom will not the

love, the mercy, the compassion of God far exceed anything exhibited by his fallen creation? If not, what kind of kingdom would it be? God's love must be and is infinitely superior to any love manifested by the creature.

"Oh, give thanks unto Jehovah; for he is good; for his loving kindness endureth for ever. Let Israel now say, That his loving kindness endureth for ever. Let the house of Aaron now say, That his loving kindness endureth for ever. Let them now that fear Jehovah say, that his loving kindness endureth for ever."—Psalm 118:1-4 ASV

AN EXAMPLE: So, given a wise, powerful, and loving God, how can students of the Bible use the baseline of harmony to prove all things, to ensure they are handling aright the word of truth? Perhaps it may be shown best by example.

For centuries chronic mistranslations of Isaiah 13:11 have distorted God's intentions for his earthly creation. "And I will punish [#6485] the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity: and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible" (Isa. 13:11 ASV).

Scholars have said that there is no other Hebrew verb that has caused translators as much trouble as the one here translated punish (Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Harris, Archer, Waltke—Vol. 2, pg. 731). It has the sense of making a visitation and is translated visit 57 times in the KJV; yet, here it is rendered punish.

The word points to an active intervention in the affairs of the one visited—an intervention to produce change. Ezekiel declared the purpose of God's world visit in clear and concise language: "Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked? Saith the Lord Jehovah; and not rather that he should return from his way and live? . . . For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord Jehovah: wherefore turn yourselves and live" (Ezek. 18:23, 32 ASV).

These words make the import of God's message through Isaiah readily apparent. God will visit the world to effect change, to turn it from its evil ways—to rehabilitate its people. The heavenly Father will visit the world, not to punish but to heal.

He will visit the world to bring deliverance from sin and death (Rom. 8:2). He will purge the arrogancy and haughtiness of his creation. He will change the hearts of stone to hearts of flesh (Ezek. 36:26)—the work of the kingdom! ". . . if the wicked turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his transgressions that he hath committed shall be remembered against him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live" (Ezek. 18:21, 22 ASV).



## **Mental Baggage**

All who sit down to study the Bible carry with them a great load of mental baggage—baggage that began accumulating at a very young age. From the Christmas and children's Bible stories to the film industry's biblical (?) epics, from the pulpit of the corner church to the blaring messages of television evangelists, they have developed their sense of the truth of the Bible; but, these stories and messages are seldom faithful to their source. Rare, indeed, are the Bible lessons of Christendom presented in an honest and reliable manner.

Those who want the truth must open the Bible with reverent caution and be aware of their long-held bias and prejudice. If they desire to cut straight the Scriptures, they must be willing to discard their mental baggage and strive for an open mind. More importantly, to dissect correctly they must be ever vigilant to the bias and prejudice of others (translators, commentators, expositors, etc.). They must ensure these twin foes of truth do not add or remove color from the picture they so painstakingly develop as they prove all things. This is not to say that all bias is necessarily bad. To be biased toward the Bible vis-a-vis science is definitely a healthy attitude; yet, an open mind is still needful.

An apparent consequence of such mental baggage is found in Peter's first epistle: "... receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:9 ASV). Note the addition of "your" to modify "souls." As indicated by the italic typestyle, this word does not appear in the Greek.

Translators apparently felt constrained to make the text agree with their belief, their bias. Rather than render it as written, they changed it to conform with their understanding of salvation. Christendom knows of only one salvation—an egocentric salvation that offers a heavenly home. So, they render Peter's writing in accord with that inept view.

Literally, the text as given in the best manuscripts is a wonderful statement of the altruistic salvation of the church: "... receiving the end [purpose] of the faith, the salvation of souls" (1 Peter 1:9 Edited). God's purpose for developing the church is the salvation of souls—the blessing of all families of the earth (Gen. 12:3), the comfort of which Paul wrote.

## **It Can Be Done**

As we have seen, students of the Bible must carefully prove each advance in knowledge, insisting on harmony with God's attributes and harmony of scripture with scripture. Many valuable aids are available today to assist in that task. Concordances, lexicons, many new translations (particularly those with Hebrew and Greek interlinear texts) are just some of the tools that should be used in the search for such understanding and harmony.

There is nothing in the Bible, however, to indicate this search is to be easy. In fact, just the opposite is taught. We must always be alert and on guard. "Take heed lest there shall

be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8 ASV)

Presentations of others must find acceptance only in proportion as they are proved to be in harmony with the Bible and the character of God.

The road may be long and arduous, but the reward far surpasses any sacrifices required. In times of discouragement the student should always keep the precious promise of our dear Master in mind: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matt. 7:7, 8 ASV).

# How to Study the Bible

*I will send a famine in the land; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord.—Amos 8:11*

*Extracted from a tract originally published by the New Albany (IN) Bible Students*

Today this prophecy is fulfilled in our minds! Despite the fact that during the past century Bibles have been printed by the millions, and despite the fact that mass education has brought ability to read God's word into all hands, nevertheless we are in the very famine foretold by the prophet.

Our heads are starving and our hearts are starving. Our heads are starving for correct, reasonable ideas about God. Our hearts are starving for assurance that God is loving and just; starving for assurance that he is somehow going to take control and save the world from its troubles.

Why are we starving? Why do we not all feel as fed as we should from the Bible?

## **The Cause of the Famine**

In the past century knowledge on all subjects has grown by leaps and bounds. This has been the century of reason and analysis. When the torchlight of reason is focused upon the traditional ideas about God and the Bible which we have been taught, we are startled to find that much in the creeds (not the Bible) defies reason.

For example: consider the creed of eternal torment. We are told that all of us are sinners by nature—inclined to do wrong. (This is true.) Then we are told that if we continue doing what we are inclined to do—what comes naturally through no fault of our own—we will be tortured. Indeed, the creeds further tell us that this torture will serve no purpose; that rehabilitation and repentance will not be possible; and that an eternity of brutal, agonizing torture will be applied as punishment for the comparatively little sin that can be accomplished in one lifetime. Our newly enlightened minds recoil at this and other teachings of the creeds.

Churches and teachers try in vain to restore our confidence in the various creeds and traditions, but it is too late. Once enlightened, it is with great difficulty that the human mind will ever be satisfied with the old darkness. And so twentieth century man, seeing the errors but not knowing the truth, drifts on with only the hollow pursuits of materialism and technology to relieve his despair. Those who struggle to find reasonable, spiritual values are starving, just as the prophet foretold.

## **What We Need**

We need food for our minds and hearts. We need a reliable authority. We need an explanation for man's disappointing past and present and an indication of what we might expect for the future. We need assurance that good men in all ages have not died in vain. We need the conviction that evil will ultimately be punished—not vengefully but with justice. We need help in overcoming our own faults. We need hope for ourselves as well as for all the poor, downtrodden, heartsick, and deluded members of the human family—both those living and those already dead.

All of these things we need; and above all we need confidence in God's love; confidence that God will supply these needs in his due time.

## **The Bible's Claim**

The Bible claims to supply these needs. It claims to be an infallible authority—the testimony of God himself—able to make us "wise unto salvation." But as we have seen, human theories and creeds have hindered us from understanding what the Bible says. Setting aside the creeds and our preconceived ideas, let us examine the Bible in a reasonable and thoughtful way. The following five time-proven steps may help everyone in their Bible study.

### **STEP 1—Study One Topic at a Time**

No one can remember and mentally cross-reference all of the verses of Scripture. Therefore, a chapter by chapter approach to Bible study cannot be as complete as a topical study. For example, suppose that as we read the Bible we have a question about the resurrection of the dead. We should not think that we understand the resurrection until we have read all the Bible verses on the subject.

The best way to find out about the resurrection (or any other Bible topic) is to use a Bible concordance. This is a book that contains an alphabetical list of every word that occurs in the Bible, with the verse in which it can be found. Many Bibles have an incomplete concordance in the back. Strong's concordance and Young's concordance are complete—every word is listed. (Both of these concordances are available in most libraries and Christian book stores.)

If we look up the word resurrection in a complete concordance, we find 41 verses in the Bible use the word. Reading all these verses would be the first step in understanding our subject.

The study of one topic at a time, the use of a concordance, and looking up all the Bible says on that topic—these things form the first step to rewarding Bible study.

## **STEP 2—Consider the Context**

As we read Bible verses, we should not think of them as isolated statements. Each of them is part of a context; each relates to the verses and chapters which go before and after. In study, therefore, notice:

Who is speaking? Who is being spoken to? Who or what is being spoken about?

If it is a verse about the resurrection, ask yourself, "Is it speaking of the resurrection of Christians, or of the resurrection of the world in general? Is it speaking of believers or non-believers?"

Noticing the context is important if we hope to make sense of all that the Bible says.

## **STEP 3—Ask, "Is This Verse Literal or Symbolic?"**

In other words, does the scripture mean just what it says, or is it describing something else in picture form?

For example, when we read in Revelation 12 about a woman clothed with the sun, and with the moon under her feet, our reason tells us that this cannot be literal—it must be symbolic or pictorial of some other people or events.

This is how to decide whether a scripture is literal or symbolic:

- a. If it does not seem reasonable if taken literally, or
- b. If it would contradict other, more plain, Bible statements,

then it should be considered symbolic and we should look for an interpretation of the symbols in harmony with the rest of the Bible.

## **STEP 4—Notice the Time Periods Involved**

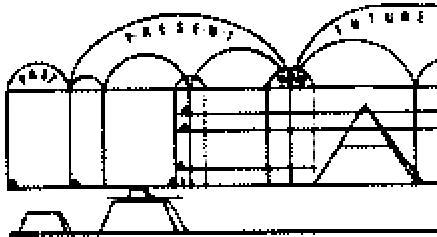
Some scriptures apply at one time, but not at another time. How do we find out when a verse applies?

The Bible divides history into three great periods or ages.

1. "The world [social order] that was" before the flood (2 Peter 3:6).
2. "The present evil world [age]" which is under Satan's control by God's permission (2 Cor. 4:4; Gal. 1:4; 2 Peter 3:7).

3. "The world [age] to come, wherein dwelleth righteousness." This will be the time when God will triumph over sin, evil, and death (2 Peter 3:13; 1 Cor. 15:22-26; Rev. 21:1-4; Isa. 25:8).

We might diagram these three time periods as follows:



Acts 15:14-17 is a good example of how scriptures are easier to understand when they are applied to the proper time period. In verse 14 we learn that God will first "visit the Gentiles" to take out of them a people for his name. After that he will restore Israel (the "tabernacle of David") so that the residue of men (those not already selected as the special people of God) might also seek after God. The words "first" and "after" in those verses indicate time periods.

God first selects a little flock of believers as a "people for his name" (Luke 12:32). This occurs during the "present evil world." Afterward, during the "world to come," he will give the residue of men the opportunity to seek and know God.

Understanding God's time periods is perhaps the most important step in studying the Bible sensibly.

#### **STEP 5—Watch for "Types" and "Antitypes"**

Much of the Old Testament is like a scale model in which God used those historic events to illustrate larger events of the future. The model or pattern in the Bible was the "type" and the event it foreshadowed is the "antitype."

An example of a type is the Passover recorded in Exodus, chapters 12 to 14. The New Testament tells us that the Passover lambs which died on behalf of Israel pictured or typed the Lamb of God—Jesus—who died on behalf of the world (1 Cor. 5:7, 8; John 1:29). The first-born children of Israel typed the true followers of Christ, the "church of the firstborn" (Heb. 12:23).

When we understand types and antitypes, we begin to see that nothing in the Bible just "takes up space"—everything in God's word has meaning and is valuable to us. . . .

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** This article is excerpted from a tract originally published by the New Albany, Indiana, Bible Students and currently available for use with the return address of the Chicago Bible Students. Quantity orders can be placed and should be mailed directly to: Chicago Bible Students, P.O. Box 6016, Chicago, IL 60680.

# The Preeminence of Christ

***And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.—Colossians 1:18***

*A verse by verse Bible study in Hebrews 1*

One of the finest examples of topical Bible study is the entire book of Hebrews. The unnamed author step by step shows the superiority of the ministry of Christ to all that preceded him. Progressively he compares Jesus to the angels, to Moses, and to Aaron. After displaying how the priesthood of Melchizedec is better than the Aaronic, he continues by demonstrating how the realities pictured by Israel's ancient tabernacle outshine the types that indicate them.

## **Superiority of Christ's Words—Verses 1 to 3**

***God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.***

An epistle often starts with the author's name. Only here and in the Johanne epistles are there exceptions to this rule. Even the book of Revelation, after an introductory phrase, starts with the author's name, "John."

The author of Hebrews, treating the sensitive subject of the superiority of the gospel to the law, decided to appeal to a higher authority, both to give added strength to his reasoning and to eliminate any biases which might be attached to the use of his own name. He calls attention to the fact that the Old Testament was not written as one continuous treatise. Written over a two thousand year period by a number of authors in 39 separate books, it was not meant to convey a step by step outline of God's plan but, rather, a source book of data from which truths could be extracted and arranged.

The prophetic revelation was given hint by hint. God revealed to Adam that the Messiah would come from the seed of the woman; to Abraham, that he should spring from his loins; to Jacob, that he should be of the tribe of Judah; to David, that he would be the heir of his throne; to Micah, that he would be born in Bethlehem; and to Isaiah, that he should be born of a virgin.

Not only did the times vary but the manner of revelation as well. Some prophets were directly inspired while others had dreams or were given visions. Some spoke directly, some in poetic metaphor, and still others acted out their prophecies. Now, the author of Hebrews continues, was the time for a clearer vision.

No longer would Jehovah's spokesman be a servant, but he would have his own Son speak for him. The Son would not only have the authority of position, "heir of all things," but would have the authority of being an eye-witness of all, the one "by whom also he made the worlds."

The contrast is not only between Jesus and the prophets of old. In the balance of the chapter the author also compares Jesus as a spokesman with the angels who carried out a similar function. The specific angels to whom he refers are apparently those mentioned in 2:2-5 and were angelic forces active in the giving of the law at Sinai. (See also Acts 7:53 and Gal. 3:19).

The two phrases in verse three are well rendered in the Revised Version of the Bible, "He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature." The authority of Christ's words are magnified by the even greater glory which they reflect and authenticated by his bearing the exact impression of God's own nature, the divine—"far above all principalities and powers" (Eph. 1:21).

His right to this position of second highest power in the entire universe was attained by his "more excellent" ministry of providing redemption for man's sins through his death on the cross.

#### **A More Excellent Name—Verses 4 and 5**

***Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?***

In the customs of our day an inheritance is a right to property after the death of another, usually an ancestor. The usage of this term in the Bible is different. It merely shows the continuity of possession of the inherited object within the family line. In the text under consideration the word shows the family relationship by which Jesus achieved his exaltation. We know not how many ranks of angels there are. Some are indeed very powerful. The highest ranks of the angelic hosts appear to have been filled by Lucifer and Gabriel. Yet none of these could claim the same family position of Jesus. He was uniquely the "only begotten" Son of God.

The writer evinces two Old Testament quotes to support his point. The first is very direct and is taken from a passage that both Jews and Christians view as a Messianic Psalm. It is from Psalm 2:7, "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."

The second quote, however, is more difficult to trace. There are three texts with these words: 2 Samuel 7:14; 1 Chronicles 17:13 and 22:10. However, all three refer in context to Solomon as the one chosen by God to build the temple for which David longed. A



fourth reference with similar terminology is found in Psalm 89:26, 27 and refers to King David himself.

An important rule of prophetic interpretation can be noticed here. The author of Hebrews makes no excuse for applying Old Testament references, not to their original recipients but to their larger counterparts—to the one who would be both "David's son and David's Lord" (Matt. 22:45) and "the greater than Solomon" (Matt. 12:42).

The implication is clear. The significant interpretation of the Old Testament references is not to the ones to whom they were addressed but to a greater counterpart, the Messiah of Israel. Both texts are used to establish his familial claim to his newly inherited position at the right hand of the heavenly Father.

### **Over the Angels—Verses 6 to 9**

*And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.*

The quotation evoked to demonstrate that Christ is to be worshipped by the angels appears to be an amplification of the last phrase of Psalm 97:7, "worship him, all ye gods." Once again, the choice of the quotation is curious. The time setting of the Psalm is when "The LORD reigneth" and when "his lightnings enlightened the world" (vs. 1, 4). These verses seemingly apply to the Messianic reign and not to the time of the first advent.

This confusion may be clarified by several translations of the Hebrew text which change both the word order and the tense. The New American Standard, American Standard, and New King James Bibles phrase it thus: "And when he again brings the first born into the world . . ." These translations suggest an application at the second advent of Christ rather than the first. This accords better with the Psalm source of the quotation. In any case, the point of the Old Testament passage is clear—Messiah's position is sufficiently higher than that of the angels so that he is deserving of their worship.

In the next pair of citations the author contrasts the offices of angels and the Son. The former are "ministers" while the latter is a king. The Greek word *leiturgous* denotes a noble position. Rather than being a slave or paid employee, it denotes one who voluntarily offers to serve without remuneration. Professor W. E. Vine says it refers primarily to "one who discharged a public office at his own expense." This is an honorable position and implies a spirit we would do well to emulate. However, it is not to be compared with the position of Christ, who not only has an everlasting throne but whose rule is denoted by righteousness.

The Old Testament quotation is taken from Psalm 45:6, 7. It not only designates Christ as the holder of this exalted position but also lists the qualifications which entitled him to it. "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity." It is not enough to desire acts of righteousness but one must also totally oppose acts of unrighteousness. Only with such qualifications can a ruler be fit to root out evil and establish righteousness in its place. Since other scriptures offer the followers of Jesus a share in his throne (Rev. 20:4), it is imperative that these followers develop the same proclivity toward righteousness and detestation of evil.

The term "oil of gladness" contains the thought of "acceptance." "Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance" (Acts 2:28; see also Psa. 21:6). There is no implication in the forty-fifth Psalm that Jesus' "fellows," the other angelic beings, did not also "love righteousness and hate iniquity." The thought, rather, is that Jesus excelled in these attributes to a degree not obtained by his fellows. The verse highlights these characteristics as primary ones for those who would share his throne.

### **The Foundations—Verses 10 to 12**

***And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.***

The author of our study now proceeds to show the principles of the workmanship of the Messiah. The quotation is from Psalm 102:25-27. Once again the New Testament helps us interpret the Old. The student, without this citation in the book of Hebrews, would find difficulty in understanding this Psalm and might be inclined to look at it as a reference to the writer's own experiences and time period. However, the citation here definitely defines this Psalm as Messianic.

A problem remains, however. In this Psalm the actor appears to be Jehovah, while the author of Hebrews refers it to Jesus. Apparently it illustrates the cooperation between the Father and the Son in the creative works.

While it is tempting to apply this text to the creative works of the seven days of Genesis one, such an interpretation presents a difficulty. The Bible specifically states that "the earth abideth forever" (Eccl. 1:4) and that God made it "not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited" (Isa. 45:18). Therefore "the earth" must be taken in a metaphorical sense for the society that lives upon the earth. This society is based upon two foundation stones. The first is vertical, governing man's relationship to God, and can be summarized in the single word "obedience." The second is horizontal, governing man's relations with his fellow, and is summarized in the principles of marriage found in Genesis 2:24, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

As time went on and men multiplied, these fundamental principles were embodied in the ten commandments, the first four of which were Godward and the last six manward. Still later Jesus capsulated the lesson in two commandments. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:37-40).

With the introduction of sin these fundamental principles stopped governing men and they fell backward into sin. While the verb for "perish" used in the book of Hebrews implies complete destruction, the verb in the original Psalm has a far different thought. Professor Strong, commenting on the word, #6, says it means "properly, to wander away; i.e., lose oneself; by implication, to perish."

Man wandered far away from these principles and they ceased being operative in his life. Like an old garment, they decayed from lack of use. But rather than being destroyed, they are "folded up" for future use. These same principles will be reintroduced in Christ's kingdom.

Similarly, the word translated "changed" (Strong's #2498) has a wide variety of meanings, including to "pass through," as a flood or whirlwind; and to "destroy." However the sense of the word in this passage under study is more likely the same as that given to it in Isaiah 40:31, where it is translated renew—"... they shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles . . ."

The fundamental principles which govern both man's relationship with God and with each other will be renewed by this Messiah for the simple reason that his government shall be as eternal as it is universal—for "thy years shall not fail."

#### **The Final Promise—Verses 13 and 14**

***But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?***

The study of the preeminence of Christ concludes with the writer's forceful use of Psalm 110:1. Here the identification of the Psalm with the Messiah was well recognized. Jesus' application of it to Messiah in both Matthew 22:42-46 and Mark 12:35-37 was unchallenged by the listening Pharisees. The position of being at the "right hand" is an undisputed metaphor for the position of top favor. This concluding argument is thus the apex of the evidence the writer has accumulated.

In the final verse of the chapter he again borrows language from Psalm 104:4. However he broadens the concept from showing merely the preeminence of the Messiah to the angels, but also the preeminence of all "who shall be heirs of salvation" to the angelic

hosts. By using the aforementioned Psalm instead of others, which would perhaps serve even better (see Psa. 34:7), he identifies the church with the Messiah.

This identification of a multi-membered Messiah was the great "mystery" of the Christian church (Col. 1:26, 27); namely, that Christ is not one but many members (1 Cor. 12:14).

Having established this groundwork, the writer of Hebrews is poised to further comparisons between the office of the Messiah with the great heroes of the Hebrew religion. Thus he seeks to prepare his Jewish readers to accept a radical change in their beliefs; yet not so much a change as a progression of development, for their rich religious history and the words of their inspired prophets all pointed forward to this Messiah whom he proclaimed to have been in their very midst—Jesus of Nazareth.

### **Principles of Study**

A study of the first chapter of Hebrews is not only enlightening to a comprehension of the writer's theme but also illuminates the principles of study used in the early church. Their great familiarity with the "Old Testament" allowed them to build the mighty concepts upon which the Christian religion would be based. Their use of the Jewish writings to bolster their arguments sheds great light on the proper use we are to make of biblical texts to support those themes that are so important to the Christian and to his salvation.

# How To Choose a Bible Translation

*James Parkinson*

***Every scripture inspired of God (is) also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.—2 Timothy 3:16, 17 (ASV)***

Which translation of the Bible is best for the devoted Christian? How faithful is it to the Word of God in the original Hebrew/Aramaic or Greek? How much should the Christian entrust his spiritual life to that translation?

The follower of the Lord must be wary of simply searching to find a translation that supports the viewpoint he or she likes, else they will be among them that "Will not endure the sound doctrine; but having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts" (see 2 Tim. 4:3).

We must first admit the possibility that early and top-quality manuscripts read differently and also that there may be a mistranslation (variously because it is difficult to translate, or the translator's bias overcomes him, or occasionally because the translator simply cannot understand the text). No matter how skilled and conscientious are the translators, as well as the readers, they still are imperfect.

To determine the original New Testament Greek text, usually one may use either Nestle-Aland or Westcott and Hort, or good translations made from them. Nevertheless a few texts should be further questioned, such as 1 Corinthians 15:51; Revelation 5:9, and 20:5.

A reliable mark of a translator's integrity is most often found in passages which are hard to reconcile with his own theology or doctrine. Most of these may be grouped under: (1) the nature of God and Christ; (2) the nature of man [e.g., the soul]; (3) the nature of atonement; and (4) prophecy. A second mark is found in making the English translation preserve no more--and no less--the ambiguity than is found in the original Greek or Hebrew. The selection of a corrupted text (e.g., Textus Receptus or Majority Text) might reflect badly on a New Testament translator's judgment or integrity.

## **Nature of God and Christ**

Two alterations were noted already by Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727). The first was in I Timothy 3:16 where a single stroke of the pen changed  changing "who" to "God." The latter is found in two fourth century writers, but not before the eighth century does it appear in any New Testament manuscripts.

Secondly, the trinitarian formula of 1 John 5:7, 8 may have been added to the Latin versions in about the seventh century but apparently was not translated backwards into

Greek until the fourteenth century. Few twentieth century versions insert it, except for Green and the New King James version (NKM, who simply ignore the ancient manuscripts.

John 1: 18 was first changed probably in the fourth century.

<b>Ancient Reading of John 1:18</b>
"No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten god, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."
<b>Later common reading of John 1:18 (AV)</b>
"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

The four oldest and best manuscripts of this verse, one going back to about A.D. 200, read so. [ ] was later changed to [ ], changing "only begotten god" to "only begotten son." Rotherham, Marshall, and NASB deserve credit for translating it at face value, especially as it presents difficulties for their own theologies. Many other translators attempt to obscure the theological implications by substituting expressions like "God only begotten" (ASV margin,) or "God the only Son." Some others simply refuse to believe the early manuscripts.

Two issues from the Old Testament may be noteworthy:

<b>Proverbs 8:22 (More accurate translation)</b>
The LORD created me as the beginning of his way, the first of his works of old." Similarly RV <sup>mg</sup> , ASV <sup>mg</sup> , RSV, NEB, REB, Leeser, JPS, Smith, Moffatt, NWT, Jerusalem, Lamsa
<b>Proverbs 8:22 AV</b>
"The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old." Similarly RV <sup>xt</sup> , ASV <sup>xt</sup> , NASB, NIV, Rotherham, Young, Douay, Knox, Green, Anchor
<b>Isaiah 7:14 AV (Preferred translation)</b>

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign,  
Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and  
shall call his name Immanuel."  
Similarly RV, ASV, NASB, NIV, Rotherham, Young,  
Fenton, Lamsa, Douay, NAB, Green,

**Isaiah 7:14 (Poorer translation)**

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign:  
Behold, a young maiden shall conceive, and bear a  
son, and shall call his name Immanuel."  
Similarly NEB, REB, Moffatt, Smith, NWT, JPS, Leeser,  
Knox

The word translated "virgin" has the meaning of a young maiden (with no suggestion of stigma), which prompts the alternative translation. However, unless the young maiden is a virgin, how would it be a sign from the Lord? If she were unmarried and not a virgin, she would be associated with the Adversary. It is better therefore to translate "virgin," with a marginal note that the literal word means a young maiden (as distinguished from an elderly spinster).

### **The Nature of Man**

The Hebrew *nephesh* and the Greek *psuche* are commonly translated "soul" (or "life" or "being" or "creature"), but they should be consistently translated, whether it pertains to animals or humans (and probably whether to living beings or dead bodies), and without regard to theological consequences (Gen. 1:20; 2:7; 35:18; Num. 9:6, 7; 31:28). The New World Translation and Rotherham do quite well, and the NIV is only a little behind, but the ASV and a majority of others are seriously inconsistent.

### **Atonement**

Note two corrections in accordance with the high-quality ancient manuscripts:

I Corinthians 5:7: "Christ our passover hath been sacrificed .

I Peter 3:18: "For Christ also once died [not suffered] for sins, the just for the unjust." (Of the eleven best manuscripts and three good ancient versions, only the Vatican 1209 and 81 read "suffered.")

These corrections are more reassuring to the Lutheran than to the strict Calvinist. (Luther emphasized that Christ died for every man; Calvin insisted that it was not for every man, but only for the elect.) Accordingly, Young, Phillips, Taylor, and Green (all of varying Calvinist backgrounds) reject both corrections, as do a few others.

**Ancient reading of Acts 20:28**



### Translations of Revelation 22:12

"And, behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (AV, KJV).  
Similarly: Lamsa, Young, Wilson<sup>int</sup>

Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is" (ASV, better manuscripts).  
Similarly: RV, Rotherham, NWT, Kingdom Interlinear, Wilson<sup>txt</sup>, Marshall, Green, Concordant

"Yes, I am coming soon, and bringing my recompense with me, to requite everyone according to his deeds!" (NEB).  
"See, I come quickly! I carry my reward with me, and repay every man according to his deeds" (Phillips).  
Similarly: Douay, NRSV, Wuest, NAB, Jerusalem, NKJV

"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done [Lit. As his work is]" (NASB).  
"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done" (NIV).  
Similarly: RSV, Moffatt, Goodspeed, TEV, CEV, Barclay, Taylor

### Character

A slight difference in wording can make a real difference in meaning, as in 2 Timothy 6: 10:

"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (ASV).  
Similarly: RV, NASB, NRSV, NIV, NKJV, Rotherham, Marshall, Wilson, NWT, TEV, TCNT, TNT<sup>mg</sup>, Berkeley, Knox

"For the love of money is the root of all evil" (AV).  
Similarly: NEB, REB, RSV, Barclay, Moffatt, Lamsa, Douay-Rheims/Conf, NAB, Jerusalem

## Punctuation

Punctuation was not used when the Bible was written, nor for many centuries afterwards. Sometimes just a comma can make a difference. More significant than changing commas in Ephesians 1:4, 5 and Colossians 3:16 is the case of Luke 23:43.

<b>Luke 23:43 (Recommended translation)</b>
"And Jesus said unto him. Verily I say unto thee today, thou shalt be with me in paradise."
<b>Luke 23:43 (AV)</b>
"And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day thou shalt be with me in paradise."

Grammatically the comma goes equally well before or after the word "today." Rotherham, the New World translation, and Concordant place it after. It is preferred to go after "today," because until the third day, according to Acts 2:3 1, Christ went to "hell"-- which is not normally considered Paradise.

## Chronology

The accession year or non-accession year systems are each used by various kings in the Old Testament, i.e., the year the new king comes to the throne may be called year zero (0) by one king [e.g., Amel Marduk, 2 Kings 25:27] but year one (1) by another [e.g., Saul, Israel's first king, I Samuel 13:1. Properly "Saul was in his first year when he began to reign, and when he had reigned two years over Israel. Green handles it about as well as any, though still imperfectly for King Saul in I Samuel 13: 1.

## Tabernacle and Temple

Read "tent of meeting" (where God would meet with man) rather than "tabernacle of the congregation" in Exodus 27:21 and everywhere else; "tabernacle of the tent of meeting" rather than "tabernacle of the tent of the congregation" in Exodus 39:32 and everywhere else; also read "tent" for "tabernacle" in Exodus 26:9, 31:7, and some other places, but not everywhere. (The Hebrew *ohel*--"tent" is indicated in the bold face type above.) Correcting this confusion was one of the stated goals of the Revised Version, which has been followed by ASV, RSV, NASB, JPS, though not by Green.

Nowadays "meal offering" or "grain offering" is better understood than "meat offering" in Exodus 29:41 and elsewhere. It is updated in the Revised Version and most others.

## Archaic

The archaic "gave up the ghost" should be replaced by "gave up the breath" (or expired) in Genesis 25:8 and everywhere else, as Rotherham, RSV, NASB, but not RV and ASV.

In Job 3:8, "their mourning" should be corrected to "leviathan," as do RV and most. Rotherham translates it "dragon of the sky" (i.e., the constellation Draco); he may well be right.

Some words or phrases should be corrected in many places; such as *gehenna* for "hell" in Matthew 5:22; 18:9; and others. Additional examples are: "consummation (or end) of the age" for "end of the world" in Matthew 13:39 and elsewhere; "presence" for "coming" for the Greek word *parousia*  in Matthew 24:3; 1Corinthians 15:23; Philippians 2:12; and 2 Thessalonians 2:8, 9 among others; and "shall have come" for "shall come" in Matthew

24:50; Revelation 3:3 (twice) and others--whenever the Greek word *heko* is used in the future tense

Sometimes later manuscripts added whole verses, which therefore should be omitted today. Examples include Matthew 18:11; Mark 16:9-20; Luke 17:36; John 7:53-8:11; and Acts 8:37.

In some passages the Authorized Version is essentially accurate while various attempts to improve on them are not. Examples are found in Genesis 4:23; Numbers 31:28; Matthew 24:33; and I Corinthians 15:22.

### **In Need of Further Study**

In I Corinthians 15:51, 52 a different reading has top quality support in the manuscripts, although about 95 per cent of all manuscripts support the Authorized Version reading.

<b>Quality reading (5 of the 8 best)</b>
"Behold I tell you a mystery: We shall all sleep, but we shall not all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" (I Cor. 15:51, 52).
<b>Quality reading (2 of the 8 best, plus 500)</b>
"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" (I Cor. 15:51, 52 ASV)

Kenneth W. Clark observes, "Though not generally acknowledged, the strongest textual attestation (□, A, C, 33, *et al* supports a different reading: 'We shall all sleep, but we shall not all be changed.'" (*Studia Paulina*; Haarlem [Neth.]: de Erven F. Bohn N.V., 1953, pp. 63, 64). The Anchor Bible acknowledges Clark but rejects the reading. Statistically, there is an 85 per cent chance that the first reading was the original, but it is not definite.

In Revelation 20:5, "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished" is missing from 68 manuscripts (including 2053 and □, two of the three best) out of about 200, and also missing in the Aramiac (Syriac). Hence Lamsa omits it and the Anchor Bible makes note of it. Most manuscripts omit the words "but" and "again," yet the whole sentence is not well supported. (The common explanation that a scribe's eye simply skipped from one "the thousand years" to the next is unlikely for such a theologically charged passage.)

It is difficult to find objectivity in the translation of John 1:1. If Colwell's rule is correct (that the definite predicate nominative does not take the article) then "the Word was God" would be allowable. This translation is rejected on two sides. Because the indefinite predicate nominative would also not take the definite article, "the Word was a god" should be no less allowable. Still others think the Greek *theos* here implies a quality and translate it as "the Word was divine." Rejecting all three, the New English Bible says, "What God was the Word was." The ancient reading of John 1:18 mentioned above will impact the translation of verse 1.

### From Various Ancient Versions

There are interesting readings in some of the most ancient versions-the Greek, Latin, and Aramaic (Syriac).

#### Exodus 12:40

"Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt and in Canaan, was four hundred and thirty years" (Septuagint, Samaritan).

"Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years" (AV).

Paul, educated by Gamaliel at Jerusalem, apparently provides independent confirmation of the Septuagint and Samaritan, although the Authorized Version reading can also be understood consistent with Galatians 3:16, 17, "Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed . . . Now this I say: A covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law [*covenant*], which came four hundred and thirty years after, doth not disannul, so as to make the promise [*covenant*] of none effect" (ASV).

**Numbers 25:4**

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the chiefs of the people and expose them before the LORD in the daylight that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from the children of Israel" (Lamsa, Aramaic).

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel" (AV).

**Job 29:18**

"Then I said, I shall become straight like a reed. I shall deliver the poor and multiply my days like the sand of the seas" (Lamsa, Aramaic).

"Then I said, I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand" (AV).

**Luke 16:22, 23**

"But the rich man also died and was buried in hell. And lifting up his eyes . . ." (Douay Rheims,/Confraternity, Latin Vulgate).

"The rich man also died, and was buried. And in hell he lift up his eyes. . ." (AV).

The last reading could result from different punctuation in the Greek, but might also need a change in word order. None of these last three readings should be considered confirmed to any degree.

**A Place for Paraphrase**

To use a paraphrased translation as a regular study Bible is to entrust one's spiritual life to another man. Used wisely, paraphrases such as Ferrar Fenton, Moffatt, Phillips, or Barclay, may nevertheless be helpful. If one first reads a good translation (e.g., NASB or Rotherham), he may find the paraphrase says it much clearer, or he may find it far off the mark. [Some say they like Weymouth because he is usually right, and when he is not, he is usually so far off you cannot miss it!] By way of examples:

**Romans 14:23 (Barclay)**

". . . if a man eats, and is still not sure if he is doing the right thing or not, he stands condemned for eating."

**Romans 14:23 AV**

"And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because *he eateth* not of faith: for whatsoever *is* not of faith is sin."

**Proverbs 27:15, 16 REB**

"A constant dripping on a rainy day--that is what a woman's nagging is like. As well try to control the wind as to control her! As well try to pick up oil in one's fingers."

**Proverbs 27:15, 16 AV**

"A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike. Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of his right hand which bewrayeth itself."

Somewhat different from a paraphrase is recognition of Hebrew idioms expressed in Greek words.

**Translations of Hebrews 7:3**

"There is no record of Melchizedek's father or mother, or any of his ancestors, no record of his birth or his death" (TEV).

"There is no mention of his father; there is no mention of his mother; no ancestor of his is ever mentioned. His days are never said to have any beginning, and his life is never said to have any end" (Barclay).

"There is no record of his father, or mother, or lineage, nor again of any beginning of his days, or end of his life" (TCNT).

"[Melchisedec] without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life" (AV).

Lamsa, Ferrar Fenton, Translator's New Testament, Stern, Schonfield margin, and also Knox are similar to the Twentieth Century New Testament (TCNT), which is the closest equivalent to the Greek.

## Overview

Practically no English translation is without some merit. (Joseph Smith's *Inspired Version* appears to be an exception.) The Authorized Version, or King James Version (AV or KJV) probably reaches a standard of literary excellence unmatched in any language (including the Hebrew and Greek), but at significant cost of faithfulness to the original. The Revised Version (RV) and American Standard Version (ASV, 1901) correct a majority of the AV errors at minimal sacrifice of literary style, though they retain much of its theological bias.

Many versions update the language to modern English. The New American Standard Bible (NASB or NAS) retains most of the accuracy of the ASV; while the Revised Standard Version (RSV, a revision of the ASV apparently influenced by the Jewish Publication Society) stresses understandability at the expense of accuracy; the New English Bible (NEB) starts from scratch and takes a still greater step backwards in accuracy. The New International Version (NIV) tries to balance accuracy, clarity, literary quality, and some measure of continuity with the AV and ASV translations, though in its claimed suppression of "sectarian bias," it openly retains the strongest bias towards traditional evangelical theology.

In addition to the committee translations above: J. B. Rotherham (British Adventist) *The Emphasized Bible* (1872-1902) stresses accuracy, even to including the appropriate emphasis in English. The Jehovah's Witnesses' *New World Translation* (NWT, 1950) offers a relatively accurate translation from a different theological perspective. Like Rotherham, though, it is often not smooth reading. Jewish Publication Society JPS; ed. Max L. Margolis, 1917) is a good translation from a third perspective and is superior to Isaac Leeser's (1853). *An American Translation* (Old Testament: J. M. Powis Smith, T. J. Meek, L. Waterman, A. Gordon; New Testament, Edgar Goodspeed; University of Chicago, 1931) is a fairly good translation with many excellent and thought provoking readings. Jay P. Green, *The Interlinear Hebrew/Greek English Bible* (1979) is a diaglott for the entire Bible, though with an uncorrected Greek text. Robert Young's *Literal Translation* (1862) stresses literal translation. Ferrar Fenton (1895), with particular expertise in Hebrew, offers a free and idiomatic translation, which nonetheless often sacrifices accuracy. Douay-Rheims (1582, 1609, Confraternity revision, 1950) is the standard Roman Catholic translation from the Latin Vulgate, while George M. Lamsa (1957) translates from the Aramaic (Syriac). The *Translator's New Testament* (1973) is sadly a mixture of translation and indoctrination.

In order to objectively distinguish accuracy of the English versions of the Bible, lists of corrections to the AV were prepared before evaluating any translation. Corrections included care with verb tenses, nouns, and punctuation, doctrinally sensitive texts, consistent translation, use of ancient manuscripts, archaic and untranslated words, as well as difficult-to-comprehend texts with vague translation, and also passages where the AV was correct in the first place. In this way it is intended to suppress an evaluator's personal biases. Preliminary results (reflecting about 80 % of the evaluations) follow below. (Note: Differences of plus or minus 5, or less, are usually not significant.)

There have been some surprises for the writer. Overall, the most accurate appears to be Rotherham, even though significantly short of the ideal. In the Old Testament, ASV, NASB and RSV are comparably strong. In the New Testament, the Marshall and Kingdom Interlinear diatolts are worthy competitors, while Concordant and the Wilson diatolt also would have been had they started with better Greek texts.

For personal and group study the ASV and NASB have advantages. They are more accurate than most. They read well and are easily followed by those who are reading from the KJV, and the additional Bible helps (concordances, lexicons, cross-references) are easily adaptable to them. The first reference to consult for accuracy should likely be Rotherham. If ASV, Rotherham, Marshall diatolt and the Kingdom Interlinear (or JPS and NWF in the Old Testament) all agree, then there is a high likelihood that the translation is correct. (Nevertheless none of these even hints at the problems of 1 Corinthians 15:51 and Revelation 20:5.) For expanded translation and paraphrasing, try Wuest, Weymouth, and possibly Moffatt. For one just learning English, *Today's English Version* might temporarily be better than nothing.

A good study Bible should have chapter and verse numbers, marginal references, preferably a good concordance and maps, a sturdy binding, and should be as accurate as possible. The student should add notes, alternative translations, and corrections of which he can be confident.

It is apparent that all English versions of the Bible are a mixture of translation and interpretation or indoctrination. E. Cadman Colwell, late president of the School of Theology, Claremont, California (Methodist), in his *Which is the Best New Testament?*, concludes that no existing translation is adequate but "the best is still to be." It is good for the Bible student to keep this thought in the back of his mind.

Now, after deciding which is the best translation, best edition, and what are its limitations, let us now read the Bible, study it, meditate on it, and try to live it every day and at every breath.

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1. C. H. Dodd, driving force of the NEB, acknowledges of *the Word was a god*--"As a word-for-word translation it cannot be faulted." He rejects it, saying, "The reason why it is unacceptable is that it runs counter to the current of Johannine thought, and indeed of Christian thought as a whole" (as though theological acceptability should be a criterion!) Paralleling with John 4:24 ("God is [a] spirit"), Dodd



rejects also the AV rendering of John 1:1 in favor of that of the NEB. As for the original text of John 1:18, he dismisses it as "grammatically exceptional, if not eccentric." (Technical Papers for the Bible Translator, 28, Jan. 1977, pp. 101ff.)

Actually the Greek from here is not identical to that of John 4:24, but to that of I Timothy 6:10 (see translations above).

<b>Old Testament English Translations</b>	<b>Accuracy</b>
American Standard Version (ASV, 1901)	84
New American Standard Bible (NASB, 1963)	82
(British) Revised Version (RV, 1881-1885)	77
Rotherham, The Emphasized Bible (Rhm, 1902)	82
Sacred Name restoration Bible (Triana, modified Rhm, 1963)	82
Revised Standard Version (RSV, 1952)	82
New Revised Standard Version (NRSV, 1989)	76
Aimplified (1965)	79
New World (NWT, 1960)	78
Jewish Publication Society (Margolis; JPS, 1917)	76
Jewish Publication Society - Revised (JPS2, 1985)	64
Berkeley (Verkuyl, 1959)	76
Darby	75
New International Version (NIV, 1973)	73
New King James Version (NKJV, 1979)	73
Revised English Bible (REB, 1989)	71
New English Bible (NEB, 1970)	69
Anchor Bible (1964 - )	Est. 70
New Century Version (NCV, 1987)	69
Smith-Goodspeed (1927)	68
Jay Green diagiott (1979)	67
Byington (1972)	67
New American Bible (NAB, 1970)	67

Jerusalem (1966)	66
Leeser (Jewish, 1854)	61
Moffatt (1924)	60 <sup>-</sup>
Today's English Version (TEV = GNB Good News Bible, 1976)	57
Young's Literal (1863)	54
Contemporary English Version (CEV, 1995)	52
Living Bible (K. Taylor, 1971)	51 <sup>+</sup>

EDITOR'S NOTE: The charts above and below are based on an analysis of some 68 Old Testament texts and 141 New Testament texts; results are normalized to a scale of 0-100 to compare accuracy of English translations of the Bible. Authorized Version (AV, KJV, 1611) rated at 5-20.

New Testament English Translations	Accuracies		
	Overall	Manuscripts	Translations
Rotherham, The Emphasized Bible (1872, 1902) Sacred Name restored Bible (Triana, mod. Rthm, 1950)	85 80	99 84 <sup>-</sup>	80.5 79
Marshall diaglott (1958)	81	97	75.5
Kingdom Interlinear diaglott (J.W., 1960) New World (1950)	80 75 <sup>-</sup>	99 99	73.5 66.5
Concordant (Universalist, 1926, 1944)	76	73	77
Wilson diaglott (1864)	75	72	76
Panin Numerical, (1914)	74	95	67
Bowes (1870)	Est.72		
Wuest (1961)	71	94	63.5
Weymouth (1902) 5th/3rd Edition	71/69	92/90	63.5/61.5
Stern ("Jewish New Testament,- 1985)	69	95	60.5
Schonfield ("Original New Testament," Jewish, 1985)	69	88	62.5
New American Standard Bible (NASB, 1963) American Standard Version (ASV 1901)	68 65	95 94	59 55.5

(British) Revised Version (RV, 1881-1885)	64	94.5	53.5
Ballantine (Riverside, 1923)	66	95	56.6
Today's English Version (= Good News for Modern Man, Bratcher)	64	88	56.6
Anchor Bible (1964)	Est 63 <sup>+</sup>	Est 95 <sup>-</sup>	53
Moffatt (1913)	63	93	53
C. Kingsley Williams (N.T. In Plain English, 1951)	63	93	52.5
Chas. B. Williams (N.T. In the Language of the People, 1937)	63	93	52.5
Horner (Coptic: Sahidic [southern] 1911-1922)	62.5	84	55.5
New Revised Standard Version (NRSV, 1989)	62 <sup>+</sup>	97	51
Revised Standard Version (RSV, 1946)	62	98 <sup>-</sup>	50
Smith-Goodspeed (1923)	62	96	51
Byington (1972)	62	94.5	51
New International Version (NIV, 1973)	62	92	51.5
The Translator's New Testament CFNT, 1973)	61	90 <sup>-</sup>	52
Lattey/Westminster (RCC, 1913-1935)	61	93	50.5
New American Bible (NAB, RCC, 1970)	60 <sup>+</sup>	89	51
Ferrar Fenton (1895)	59.5	71	55.5
Revised English Bible (REB, 1989)	58	95	45.5
New English Bible (NEB)	56	92	44.5
Barclay (1976)	57	91.5	46
Amplified (1958)	57	75	50.5
Berkeley (Verkuyl, 1945)	56	62	53.5
Twentieth Century New Testament	54	88 <sup>+</sup>	42.5
Darby (Plymouth Brethren, 1871)	56	62 <sup>-</sup>	53.5
New Century Version (NCV, 1987)	54	88 <sup>+</sup>	42.5
God's Word to the Nations (GWN; Beck, revised, Lutheran, 1988)	53	90	41

Jerusalem (RCC, 1966)	52.5	91 <sup>+</sup>	39.5
Phillips (1958)	52	83	41.5
Contemporary English Version (CEV; ABS, 1995)	59	91.5	36
DouayRheims/Confraternity (RCC, 1582, 1950)	49	71	41.5
Bagster's diagiott (1877; reprinted by G. Berry,1958)	49 <sup>-</sup>	26	56
Young's Literal (Presbyterian, 1862)	45	2	59
Liviag Bible (K. Taylor, 1966)	30 <sup>-</sup>	67	29
Jay Green diaglott (1976)	39	3	51
New King James (NKJV, 1979)	32	26	34
Lamsa (Aramaic, 1940)	30	27	31

# Precept Upon Precept

*Carl Hagensick*

*Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he male to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the mill, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little. Isaiah 28:9, 10*

Knowledge is the accumulation of facts. Understanding comes from the connecting of these facts one with the other. These processes begin in earliest childhood, when one is "weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breast." The methods urged here in Isaiah are those educators today generally agree upon. First, inform the student of a number of proven facts ("precepts") and then teach the logical process of connecting these facts ("line [of reasoning] upon line [of reasoning]"). In order to hold the pupil's attention, a good teacher frequently changes the subject material, returning time and again to each theme.

In the words of one writer, "Because God deals with us as a wise parent with his children, knowing that we need our food little by little, and the lighter diet before the strong meat, therefore his truth is so arranged as to meet our necessities: a little of the truth upon one subject is placed here and a little more there; and as we take these Tittles and put them together we gain strength and are able to appreciate the whole of it. As we deal with children, so God deals with us, giving us line upon line, and precept upon precept-the same truths repeated over and over from different standpoints, thus enforcing his teachings."

Similarly, another notes the advantages of this method of receiving "a little of one thing and a little of another, that the variety of instructions might be pleasing and inviting,- a little at one time and a little at another, that they might not have their memories overcharged,- a little from one prophet and a little from another, that every one might be pleased with his friend and him whom he admired."

## **Importance of Study**

Knowledge is basic to living. A person must be acquainted with literally thousands of facts to cope with day to day life. That is why, in the United States, a minimum of twelve years are recommended for just the basic schooling, not counting the specialized training for specific fields of endeavor.

Spiritually, knowledge is just as important, perhaps even more so. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou halt rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee ..." (Hoses 4:6). Isaiah 33:6 notes that "wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation."

The writers of the New Testament commend the ear that is open to instruction. "Despise not prophesyings" (1 Thess. 5:20); the brethren in Berea were commended for having "received the word with all readiness of mind" (Acts 17:11); Paul urges Timothy to "rightly divide the word of truth."

This dividing of the word, as Paul spoke of to the Bereans, involved searching "the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so." Thus the Thessalonians were to "prove all things" and John admonished the church to "try the spirits" (1 John 4:1).

The Bible alone is the inspired word of God. It alone is guaranteed truth. But it is not an easy book to understand. Frequently the student finds, as Peter did of Paul, that in the Bible "are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16).

### **Methods of Study**

There are two main approaches that are used in the study of the word of God—the contextual and the topical. The contextual student chooses either the Bible as a whole or a specific book of the Bible and studies through it verse by verse. The topical scholar will choose a given subject matter and seek to learn all that he can about it. Both methods have advantages. Both have disadvantages.

In theory, the contextual approach opens one's mind directly to the instruction of God through the holy spirit (John 16:13). In practice, however, the student soon finds that there are a variety of ways of interpreting specific texts. He is forced either to resort to reading a number of commentaries on the text or advancing his own interpretation. In either case he is supplementing the instruction of the Bible with that of another man, either himself or the chosen commentator.

The Apostle Peter speaks directly to this problem: "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Peter 1:20, 21 NAS). This illustrates the wisdom of group study for, as the wise man said, "where no counsel is, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Prov. 11:14).

Topical study also has its problems. The strength of such an approach is that it gives meaning to the various themes which run, like a thread, through the whole of the Bible. Ideally, this method should bring to bear all that the Bible has to say on a given topic, providing the student with all of the information necessary to make a proper interpretation. In practice, unfortunately, texts which have an adverse bearing on a preferred interpretation are either missed altogether or forced to flit like two unmatched pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Texts can be misinterpreted because they are taken out of context.

These two methods of study are really complementary to each other. The one supplies what the other misses. Contextual study, carried out on a regular basis, will acquaint the reader with texts which might be omitted in topical study; while topical study will form a skeletal framework for the scriptures discovered in verse-by-verse Bible study.

### **Spiritual Comparisons**

The holy spirit is the teacher in the school of Christ. The method of its teaching is defined by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:13: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."

This suggests a topical approach. One scripture needs to be compared with another scripture. Types need to be compared with realities.

Prophecies need to be compared with fulfillments. The New Testament needs to be compared with the Old. Similar passages need to be diligently compared both for points of agreement and for dissimilarities. Translations need to be compared for accuracy and clarity. The English Bible needs to be compared with the original Greek and Hebrew. Thus it is that "precept" is added to "precept" and one "line" of reasoning is built upon another.

There are many helps available to facilitate this process of comparison. Concordances will frequently collate a number of texts on a given subject. Care should be taken to not only look under the subject word being studied but also related words. Marginal references give additional aid in linking concepts that may not be linked by words. A caution here, though, is that the linkages are frequently interpretative and reflect the bias of the compiler of the margin. Topical study Bibles, such as Nave's, also assist the student in finding pertinent texts.

Topical study aids, such as Studies in the Scriptures, provide invaluable information in the development of a biblical theme. A helpful rule, set down by the author of this series, is to make a diligent search for additional scriptures to those referenced which may either appear to agree or disagree with the suggested conclusions. The Apostle Paul similarly lauded the Bereans that in their daily study of the scriptures they did not seek to simply agree with him but to see "**whether** these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

### **Here a Little, There a Little**

One of the principles in our theme text was that God taught "here a little, there a little." It was in this vein that the writer of Hebrews opens his treatise with these words: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets" (Heb. I : I).

Rather than pour out all truth at one time and thus overload man with knowledge, God saw fit to portion out truth in gradual revelations over some forty centuries. Nor did he

always choose the same manner. At times he spoke through a materialized angel. At times he used dreams. At times he led a prophet to a particular conclusion.

The New Testament writers, having the accumulated revelation of the past in the form of the Old Testament, needed to carefully compare the varied statements, noting the contexts of the revealed utterances. Therefore they must have been completely familiar with the whole of the Hebrew scriptures. They must have been "Bible" readers to acquire such a familiarity. When they wrote they chose not to merely relate the stories and draw lessons from them but to compile them into the grand topics relating to the salvation which were revealed unto them.

The Bible is not one book, but a compilation of sixty-six books written over a long time span. The same subject matter may be treated by a number of writers. Therefore diligent search must be made to find all that pertains to a given theme.

### **Contextual Study**

Regular reading and study of the Bible is to be commended. It builds a familiarity with the history of how God has dealt- with mankind and with his plans for man's future. Such regularity also acquaints the reader with a knowledge of how God dealt with the human race and with his chosen people of Israel.

There are good tools to assist in the study of the Bible. In beginning the study of a particular book of the Bible it is helpful to find an outline of the book. This will help relate specific passages to the overall subject of the book. A verse by verse commentary, such as *The Expanded Biblical Comments*, is of inestimable value in uncovering the meaning of difficult texts.

Since we do not have the Bible in the original language in which it was written, it is helpful to have a number of reliable Bible translations for comparison. The article in this issue, *How to Choose a Bible Translation*, gives several tips in selecting such a translation. A good Bible dictionary will help fill in the background on the characters and locations of the biblical accounts. Since many of the records deal with geographical territory with which the reader may not be familiar, a Bible atlas can also be of help.

### **Prophetic Studies**

A great deal of the Bible deals with prophecy. Some tips for the study of these prophetic portions may be in order. Prophets lived in a contextual environment. They spoke primarily of situations of their own time. However, the intent of the prophecy was often more particularly to a long range fulfillment. It was to give confidence in these larger fulfillments that we read in 2 Peter 1:21: "For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (ASV).

The prophets sensed this larger fulfillment and tried with great diligence to understand the larger sense of their own words. We read of this in 1 Peter 1:10-12: "Of which



salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into."

Comprehending the local conditions of which they spoke often sheds light on the longer range fulfillment of the same words. At times it is helpful to read historical records of the same events--to understand the full impact of the prophet's words.

A good example of these principles can be found in reading passages relating to the first advent of Christ. The prophetic sections of these events often find their fulfillment in the second advent. It has been said, "In order to understand the second advent, one must look at the first." What happens to Christ, the head, at the first advent frequently happens to his body members at the second. The steps in the decline of favor to natural Israel at the first advent find a reversal in the return of that favor at the second advent.

While consistency should be sought in the usage of prophetic symbols (such as the names of the nations involved), these may not always hold because different peoples play different roles at different times. For instance, Moses may represent God in various of his actions, but certainly not when he is condemned for striking the rock twice.

The same rules can be said for the interpretation of types and shadows. If an Old Testament picture is referenced in the New Testament, we can be quite sure of its application. Great care must be taken in applying pictures which are not referenced. They may have an application but they do not carry the same mark of authenticity as those interpreted by Jesus or one of the apostles.

### **That They Might Fall**

The prophet Isaiah uses the words of our theme text just three verses later with far different connotations: "But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken" (v. 13).

If Isaiah's listeners had heeded the Lord's teachings, they would have received the rest of mind promised in verse twelve. However, being unheeding, they studied mechanically, accumulating the precepts but did not note their purpose. The same teachings which could have produced rest unto their souls became a trap unto them.

This becomes very evident when looking at the reverence the Jewish leaders paid to the letter of the law in the days of Jesus, and their accompanying hypocrisy in not living up to it. It was this ensnarement in the letter of the law that prompted the stunning

denunciation of these leaders in Matthew 23:3, "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not."

To the Christian today there is also a similar snare. The study of the word of God can produce a sterile intellectualism which robs the precepts of their real value. Always and ever the object of the Christian in his study must be to discern the will of God; and, observing, to do it. "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22).

# The Preeminence of Christ

*And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.-Colossians 1:18*

*A verse by verse Bible study in Hebrews I*

One of the finest examples of topical Bible study is the entire book of Hebrews. The unnamed author step by step shows the superiority of the ministry of Christ to all that preceded him. Progressively he compares Jesus to the angels, to Moses, and to Aaron. After displaying how the priesthood of Melchizedec is better than the Aaronic, he continues by demonstrating how the realities pictured by Israel's ancient tabernacle outshine the types that indicate them.

## **Superiority of Christ's Words**

Verses 1 to 3

*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.*

An epistle often starts with the author's name. Only here and in the Johanne epistles are there exceptions to this rule. Even the book of Revelation, after an introductory phrase, starts with the author's name, "John."

The author of Hebrews, treating the sensitive subject of the superiority of the gospel to the law, decided to appeal to a higher authority, both to give added strength to his reasoning and to eliminate any biases which might be attached to the use of his own name. He calls attention to the fact that the Old Testament was not written as one continuous treatise. Written over a two thousand year period by a number of authors in 39 separate books, it was not meant to convey a step by step outline of God's plan but, rather, a source book of data from which truths could be extracted and arranged.

The prophetic revelation was given hint by hint. God revealed to Adam that the Messiah would come from the seed of the woman; to Abraham, that he should spring from his loins; to Jacob, that he should be of the tribe of Judah; to David, that he would be the heir of his throne; to Micah, that he would be born in Bethlehem; and to Isaiah, that he should be born of a virgin.

Not only did the times vary but the manner of revelation as well. Some prophets were directly inspired while others had dreams or were given visions. Some spoke directly, some in poetic metaphor, and still others acted out their prophecies. Now, the author of Hebrews continues, was the time for a clearer vision.

No longer would Jehovah's spokesman be a servant, but he would have his own Son speak for him. The Son would not only have the authority of position, "heir of all things," but would have the authority of being an eye-witness of all, the one "by whom also he made the worlds."

The contrast is not only between Jesus and the prophets of old. In the balance of the chapter the author also compares Jesus as a spokesman with the angels who carried out a similar function. The specific angels to whom he refers are apparently those mentioned in 2:2-5 and were angelic forces active in the giving of the law at Sinai. (See also Acts 7:53 and Gal. 3:19).

The two phrases in verse three are well rendered in the Revised Version of the Bible, "He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature." The authority of Christ's words are magnified by the even greater glory which they reflect and authenticated by his bearing the exact impression of God's own nature, the divine-"far above all principalities and powers" (Eph. 1:21).

His right to this position of second highest power in the entire universe was attained by his "more excellent" ministry of providing redemption for man's sins through his death on the cross.

### **A More Excellent Name**

Verses 4 and 5

*Being made so much better than the angels, as he bath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?*

In the customs of our day an inheritance is a right to property after the death of another, usually an ancestor. The usage of this term in the Bible is different. It merely shows the continuity of possession of the inherited object within the family line. In the text under consideration the word shows the family relationship by which Jesus achieved his exaltation. We know not how many ranks of angels there are. Some are indeed very powerful. The highest ranks of the angelic hosts appear to have been filled by Lucifer and Gabriel. Yet none of these could claim the same family position of Jesus. He was uniquely the "only begotten" Son of God.

The writer evinces two Old Testament quotes to support his point. The first is very direct and is taken from a passage that both Jews and Christians view as a Messianic Psalm. It is

from Psalm 2:7, "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."

The second quote, however, is more difficult to trace. There are three texts with these words: 2 Samuel 7:14; 1 Chronicles 17:13 and 22:10. However, all three refer in context to Solomon as the one chosen by God to build the temple for which David longed. A fourth reference with similar terminology is found in Psalm 89:26, 27 and refers to King David himself.

An important rule of prophetic interpretation can be noticed here. The author of Hebrews makes no excuse for applying Old Testament references, not to their original recipients but to their larger counterparts—to the one who would be both "David's son and David's Lord" (Matt. 22:45) and "the greater than Solomon" (Matt. 12:42).

The implication is clear. The significant interpretation of the Old Testament references is not to the ones to whom they were addressed but to a greater counterpart, the Messiah of Israel. Both texts are used to establish his familial claim to his newly inherited position at the right hand of the heavenly Father.

### **Over the Angels**

Verses 6 to 9

*And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.*

The quotation evoked to demonstrate that Christ is to be worshipped by the angels appears to be an amplification of the last phrase of Psalm 97:7, "worship him, all ye gods." Once again, the choice of the quotation is curious. The time setting of the Psalm is when "The LORD reigneth" and when "his lightnings enlightened the world" (vs. 1, 4). These verses seemingly apply to the Messianic reign and not to time of the first advent.

This confusion may be clarified by several translations of the Hebrew text which change both the word order and the tense. The *New American Standard*, *American Standard*, and *New King James Bibles* phrase it thus: "And when he **again** brings the first born into the world . . ." These translations suggest an application at the second advent of Christ rather than the first. This accords better with the Psalm source of the quotation. In any case, the point of the Old Testament passage is dear-Messiah's position is sufficiently higher than that of the angels so that he is deserving of their worship.

In the next pair of citations the author contrasts the offices of angels and the Son. The former are "ministers" while the latter is a king. The Greek word *leiturgous* denotes a

noble position. Rather than being a slave or paid employee, it denotes one who voluntarily offers to serve without remuneration. Professor W. E. Vine says it refers primarily to "one who discharged a public office at his own expense." This is an honorable position and implies a spirit we would do well to emulate. However, it is not to be compared with the position of Christ, who not only has an everlasting throne but whose rule is denoted by righteousness.

The Old Testament quotation is taken from Psalm 45:6, 7. It not only designates Christ as the holder of this exalted position but also lists the qualifications which entitled him to it. "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity." It is not enough to desire acts of righteousness but one must also totally oppose acts of unrighteousness. Only with such qualifications can a ruler be fit to root out evil and establish righteousness in its place. Since other scriptures offer the followers of Jesus a share in his throne (Rev. 20:4), it is imperative that these followers develop the same proclivity toward righteousness and detestation of evil.

The term "oil of gladness" contains the thought of "acceptance." "Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance" (Acts 2:28; see also Psa. 21:6). There is no implication in the forty-fifth Psalm that Jesus' "fellows," the other angelic beings, did not also "love righteousness and hate iniquity." The thought, rather, is that Jesus excelled in these attributes to a degree not obtained by his fellows. The verse highlights these characteristics as primary ones for those who would share his throne.

## **The Foundations**

Verses 10 to 12

*And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.*

The author of our study now proceeds to show the principles of the workmanship of the Messiah. The quotation is from Psalm 102:25-27. Once again the New Testament helps us interpret the Old. The student, without this citation in the book of Hebrews, would find difficulty in understanding this Psalm and might be inclined to look at it as a reference to the writer's own experiences and time period. However, the citation here definitely defines this Psalm as Messianic.

A problem remains, however. In this Psalm the actor appears to be Jehovah, while the author of Hebrews refers it to Jesus. Apparently it illustrates the cooperation between the Father and the Son in the creative works.

While it is tempting to apply this text to the creative works of the seven days of Genesis one, such an interpretation presents a difficulty. The Bible specifically states that "the

earth abideth forever" (Eccl. 1:4) and that God made it "not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited" (Isa. 45:18). Therefore "the earth" must be taken in a metaphorical sense for the society that lives upon the earth. This society is based upon two foundation stones. The first is vertical, governing man's relationship to God, and can be summarized in the single word "obedience." The second is horizontal, governing man's relations with his fellow, and is summarized in the principles of marriage found in Genesis 2:24, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

As time went on and men multiplied, these fundamental principles were embodied in the ten commandments, the first four of which were Godward and the last six manward. Still later Jesus capsulated the lesson in two commandments. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:37-40).

With the introduction of sin these fundamental principles stopped governing men and they fell backward into sin. While the verb for "perish" used in the book of Hebrews implies complete destruction, the verb in the original Psalm has a far different thought. Professor Strong, commenting on the word, #6, says it means "properly, to wander away; i.e., lose oneself; by implication, to perish."

Man wandered far away from these principles and they ceased being operative in his life. Like an old garment, they decayed from lack of use. But rather than being destroyed, they are "folded up" for future use. These same principles will be reintroduced in Christ's kingdom.

Similarly, the word translated "changed" (Strong's #2498) has a wide variety of meanings, including to "pass through," as a flood or whirlwind; and to "destroy." However the sense of the word in this passage under study is more likely the same as that given to it in Isaiah 40:31, where it is translated renew-"... they shall **renew** their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles . . ."

The fundamental principles which govern both man's relationship with God and with each other will be renewed by this Messiah for the simple reason that his government shall be as eternal as it is universal-for "thy years shall not fail."

## **The Final Promise**

Verses 13 and 14

*But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*

The study of the preeminence of Christ concludes with the writer's forceful use of Psalm 110:1. Here the identification of the Psalm with the Messiah was well . recognized. Jesus' application of it to Messiah in both Matthew 22:42-46 and Mark 12:35-37 was unchallenged by the listening Pharisees. The position of being at the "right hand" is an undisputed metaphor for the position of top favor. This concluding argument is thus the apex of the evidence the writer has accumulated.

In the final verse of the chapter he again borrows language from Psalm 104:4. However he broadens the concept from showing merely the preeminence of the Messiah to the angels, but also the preeminence of all "who shall be heirs of salvation" to the angelic hosts. By using the aforementioned Psalm instead of others, which would perhaps serve even better (see Psa. 34:7), he identifies the church with the Messiah.

This identification of a multi-membered Messiah was the great "mystery" of the Christian church (Col. 1:26, 27); namely, that Christ is not one but many members (1 Cor. 12:14).

Having established this groundwork, the writer of Hebrews is poised to further comparisons between the office of the Messiah with the great heroes of the Hebrew religion. Thus he seeks to prepare his Jewish readers to accept a radical change in their beliefs; yet not so much a change as a progression of development, for their rich religious history and the words of their inspired prophets all pointed forward to this Messiah whom he proclaimed to have been in their very midst Jesus of Nazareth.

## **Principles of Study**

A study of the first chapter of Hebrews is not only enlightening to a comprehension of the writer's theme but also illuminates the principles of study used in the early church. Their great familiarity with the "Old Testament" allowed them to build the mighty concepts upon which the Christian religion would be based. Their use of the Jewish writings to bolster their arguments sheds great light on the proper use we are to make of biblical texts to support those themes that are so important to the Christian and to his salvation.



# NEWS AND VIEWS

## **PBI News**

The Annual Meeting of the Pastoral Bible Institute, Inc. was held on July 12, 1996 in St. Joseph, Missouri. This is required by law because we are incorporated. As part of the requirements, we must publish the financial statements of the Institute. We also publish a Directors' Report which summarizes the activity for the year. This year's report was prepared on behalf of the board of directors by Francis Earl.

## **Directors' Report**

During the past year the Institute the directors were: James Caudle, Francis Earl, Alex Gonczewski, Carl Hagensick, Loyal Petran, David Rice, Timothy Thomassen; the editors were: Francis Earl, Richard Evans, Leonard Griehs, Carl Hagensick, David Rice.

The Directors and Editors are greatly appreciative and we owe a great debt of gratitude to the many brothers and sisters in the Lord who have worked many hours in the labor of love in assisting us in managing the affairs of the Institute and in publishing the Herald of Christ's Kingdom. Their diligent efforts are essential to the activities of the Institute. Their help has been invaluable and we could not have functioned without them. May God continue to bless their efforts.

The work on the revision of the Bylaws and Guidelines has been completed. The revised Bylaws were sent to Institute members with their proxy ballot for the election of directors. The republishing of Bro. Streeter's books on Revelation and the status of on-line computer access of Herald articles will be discussed at the July membership meeting.

The bi-monthly issues of the Herald are continuing and with continued reader acceptance. Our readers have also expressed appreciation of the News & Views feature of the Herald. The present format will continue as it is at this time. We are thankful to our heavenly Father for the wide acceptance and the comments made regarding the format and the spiritual uplift received from the articles published in each issue of the Herald.

The Directors and Editors who are able, continue making their pilgrim trips. Bro. David Rice visited brethren and interested ones in England, Nigeria, Pakistan and Nepal. In route to Africa, David was able to attend a meeting in London at the Nadals with studies on Cleansing of the Sanctuary and Ezekiel's Temple. In Nigeria a young people's seminar had been organized by the Nigerian brethren and the Bible Students Committee for Africa. Bro. Joseph Ajise escorted him to Lagos to visit with good contacts, and encouraging meetings were held with very good interest. David then went to Nepal where his host introduced him to several new Christian contacts. A complete report on this trip was in the News & Views the past year.

Managing Editor Carl Hagensick made several extended trips in the USA to visit isolated brethren. A Fall 1995, trip took him to 16 destinations and a trip in the Spring covered nine cities. During the Summer, 19 places in the Northeast were visited.

Other directors and editors served multiple classes during the year as part of their ongoing ministry.

The Institute had another effective way of witnessing to God's Divine plan by supplying 31 separate free booklets on Scriptural topics. These were shipped free of charge. Through May 31, 3,040 booklets were mailed. Mailings during the past two years have increased dramatically due to the inclusion of the mail-in postcard inserts for readers to respond. The booklets most requested were: God's Kingdom; Great World Changes Long Foretold; The Plan of God in Brief. These accounted for about 20 percent of all booklets shipped.

We at the Institute thank our heavenly Father for the privilege of endeavoring to serve the interests of his kingdom. "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end for the grace that is brought unto you by the Revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1.13).

*We invite your comments to our annual report or to any of the material in this journal. Address correspondence to: Pastoral Bible Institute, 2310 S. Green Bay Rd., C-226, Racine, WI 53406*

## Financial Statements of the Pastoral Bible Institute, Inc.

### Balance Sheet April 30, 1996

#### ASSETS:

Cash on Hand . . . . .	\$ 5,078.54
Certificates of Deposit . . . . .	67,000.00
Savings Account . . . . .	4,900.73
Accounts Receivable . . . . .	200.00
Inventory . . . . .	371.90

#### FIXED ASSETS:

Office Equipment . . . . .	6,319.00
Book Library . . . . .	800.00
Total Assets . . . . .	\$84,670.17

#### LIABILITIES:

Accounts Payable . . . . .	70.00
Subscriptions Paid in Advance . . . . .	450.00
Total Liabilities . . . . .	520.00

NET WORTH (April 30, 1996) \$84,150.17

### Analysis of Net Worth for Fiscal Year Ending April 30, 1996

#### INCOME:

Contributions . . . . .	\$14,070.67
Herald Subscriptions . . . . .	4,300.00
Interest Earned . . . . .	2,420.50
Herald Gift Subscriptions . . . . .	65.00
P.B.I. New Members . . . . .	35.00
Legacies . . . . .	950.00
Total Income . . . . .	\$21,841.17

Pilgrim Expense . . . . .	\$ 4,454.00
Printing & Mailing Herald . . . . .	8,226.69
Gifts . . . . .	300.00
Miscellaneous Postage . . . . .	1,236.50
Administration & Office Expense . . . . .	3,415.75
Depreciation, Office Equipment . . . . .	5,134.00
Booklets & Advertising . . . . .	2,295.50
Total Expenses . . . . .	\$25,062.44

Net (Loss) for Fiscal Year (3,221.27)

Net Worth May 1, 1995 \$ 87,371.44

**Net Worth April 30, 1996 . \$ 84,150.17**

## Letters from Readers

Editors' Note: It is the policy of the Herald to publish letters from readers in their entirety, if possible. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and clarity of presentation. The views expressed in letters are not necessarily those held by the editorial committee. All letters are subject to editorial approval.

Greetings from New Zealand. Many thanks for sending me the Herald. I have received it these many years ever since Casmir Lanowick visited New Zealand. I am pleased to note that your policy is to favor the Jewish cause. They don't have many who support them. I have always believed they are God's chosen nation and their revival is a sure sign Christ's return is drawing nearer. But our world has to go through "a time of trouble such as never was" (Daniel 12:1) before it knows the peace of Christ's reign. The article in the May-June issue of THE HERALD, "This Year in Jerusaletri" is excellent, but how few realize that the Gospel preached to Abraham is soon to be fulfilled. Although it may not look likely at the present time, Britain has to leave membership of the EEC and Russia will invade Israel as Ezekiel states in chapters 38 and 39. A world in turmoil will finally yield to Israel's Messiah and His rule of peace on earth and goodwill toward all men. (Luke). Best wishes and kind regards to you all from New Zealand.

*-Basil Brown, New Zealand*

## Around the World

### *Middle East*

For centuries, religion has inspired the most violent actions in the Middle East. A quick tour of the area shows that militant Islam is the common thread, offset by the growing power of the nationalist Orthodoxy in Israel. Throughout much of the region there is a dangerous population bulge of the young, the restless and the volatile. In Saudi Arabia, 58 percent of the population is under 24; in Egypt 57 percent, in Jordan 65 percent. Saudi Arabia: the royal family is deeply entwined with the ulema, the religious leadership, and Islamic law is strictly enforced. Senior religious scholars have posed a series of open challenges. The government itself is in disarray; Egypt: it remains perpetually in ruins and a breeding ground for fundamentalism. Its Islamic fundamentalists periodically shoot up tourists, Coptic Christians, and are shot up in return. Jordan: there has been rioting among the Bedouin, traditionally the King's base of support in a population that is largely Palestinian.

Government officials worry about a growing social disparity, with a tiny rich elite surrounded by increasing poverty; Israel: Palestinians are frustrated at being kept from jobs and are resentful of highhanded leaders who have returned without resolving the peace process; Syria and Iraq: they remain gangster states, each ruthlessly ruled by a

small clique from a religious minority; Algeria: the military dictatorship is battling Islamic revolutionaries who murder ruthlessly; Turkey: an Islamic fundamentalist Prime Minister has been elected. Turkey is suppressing a Kurdish insurgency which has been training in Syria. Followers are advised to be wary of any rosy forecasts for the Middle East.

*New York Times Week in Review, 6/30/96*

### *Islam*

Saudi Arabia finds itself besieged by a monster it helped to create. The Saudi regime was once the main backer of Islamic opposition groups in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world. It helped finance and encourage 15,000 volunteers to fight. Following the Gulf war of 1991, the Saudis asked for US help to counter a potential Iraqi threat and more than 500,000 American soldiers used Saudi Arabia as a base to liberate Kuwait. A group of 400 scholars, clerics and technocrats signed a letter to the king detailing 12 demands which included a reshuffling of the religious establishment and the forbidding of foreign troops on Saudi soil. Since then, continued efforts to disrupt the Saudi governing family have resulted in divisions and radical opposition which threatens the stability of the regime. The radical opposition is thought to be made up of loose groups, each following a specific cleric. The fear is that further attacks will disrupt the internal safety of the Saudis. More than **fifty** percent of the population is aged under 21, and with the decline in oil prices and incomes, some have very little to lose.

*-Financial Times, 6/27/96*

For many years the Islamic movement has appeared as a single international movement. Now Islamic parties are fracturing in Egypt and Jordan, and Iran's Islamic government faces religious challenges over issues like abortion. Saudi Arabia, keeper of Islam's holiest shrines and led by one of the religion's most conservative sects, has spawned a militant movement intent on bringing down the ruling family. Islamists are slowly gaining power in outlying countries such as Turkey, which named a Muslim leader as prime minister. In Algeria the government

cancelled 1990 elections after Islamists swept to victory. The result has been six years of violence. In Kuwait, Islamic parties control a sizeable minority of seats in the Parliament. They won a victory earlier this year in gaining passage of a bill that could require schools to separate men and women in classrooms and halls.

*-Wall Street Journal, 7/3/96*

## *Iraq*

Sadam Hussein is reported to be developing new biological weapons using Ebola and similar viruses. Russian sources say Iraq has produced rare and fatal African and Asian diseases.

*-Bible Light International, #3, 1996*

## *Israel*

Editor's note: The election of Benjamin Netanyahu as Prime Minister has resulted in a proliferation of speculation by both the press and Bible students in general as to what it means for Israel and the plan of God. *News and Views* will attempt to capture factual information rather than speculation. The articles cited in the next few issues will be those which detail specifics about changes in Israel due to the change in government.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu blamed Iran and Syria for increasing terrorism on Israel and said he would seek to step up international pressure against them. He said that military efforts alone were ineffective at combating terrorism and he said the solution is to "enact an international policy" based upon groundwork started in March at the international anti-terrorism conference in Egypt.

*(Bloomberg News Service, 6/28/96)*

An envoy of Benjamin Netanyahu has secretly met Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. There was no immediate confirmation from either side of the meeting between Arafat and Dore Gold in the Gaza strip.

*(Bloomberg News Service, 6/28/96)*

U.S. Secretary Warren Christopher met with Egyptian President Mubarak and PLO Chairman Arafat to assure them that Israel intends to keep its obligations under peace accords with the Arabs. Egypt insisted that Israel had to negotiate under a "land for peace" arrangement, while Arafat demanded Israel adhere to an agreement banning construction of West Bank settlements. Netanyahu has referred to "an unqualified right of the Jewish people to settle in the land of Israel," including the Palestinian-controlled areas.

*(Associated Press, 6/26/96)*

New precious metal coins from the Bank of Israel, called "Nightingale and Fig," have been inspired by Solomon's "Song of Songs." The verse from the Bible is found in Song of Songs 2:11-13. The theme of the new coins, Holy Land wildlife, highlights endangered animals and protected plants which are mentioned in the Bible.

*(Bloomberg News Service, 6/19/96)*

In a time of momentous Middle East political developments in which the future status of Jerusalem is a key issue, The American Jewish Congress, together with a large group of prestigious academic institutions, co-sponsored "Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity and Islam," a conference held in Jerusalem from June 23-28. The conference brought together distinguished scholars from Israeli, American and European institutions to focus on Jerusalem as a holy city to three religions. Father Thomas Stransky of Tantur Ecumenical Institute, and Prof. Lee Levine of the Hebrew University serve as co-chairs of the conference. "The political developments of recent years have been momentous and unprecedented. Since politics and religion have been inextricably intertwined in the Middle East for millennia, these accords, political in essence, also affect the historical and religious traditions of the peoples involved. In the past, these traditions have all too often been mobilized in the cause of hostility, culminating in holy wars," they said. It is believed to be the first such conference of all three faiths centered in Jerusalem, with Roman Catholicism representing the Christian interests.

*(PR Newswire, 6/17/96)*

The issue now is not land for peace but land for time. Israel needs time to see whether the Arab political culture can be transformed. There are Palestinians who believe that it was the killing of Israelis that caused Israel to withdraw from Lebanon in the 1980s, seek peace in the 1990s and finally recognize the PLO. The danger is that these people may take Israel's eagerness for accommodation as a sign that more terrorism will pay off. A study of Arab public opinion in the Middle East Quarterly concluded that most Arabs do not seem to believe that the Arab-Israeli conflict has been terminated but only transformed. In this view the peace treaties are a temporary truce rather than an end to hostilities, a situation that will change when the Palestinians rebuild their power.

*(US News & World Report, 6/10/96)*

Thirty-thousand Israelis from the US, Canada, Ethiopia and Argentina have formed a new political party in Israel, Ba'aliya. Nathan Sharansky is the party leader; he says the party's main concern is to "put Zionism rather than security in the center of the map, and attract Jews from all over the world to Israel." Israel is the only country where Jewish population is growing, independent of immigration.

*(Jerusalem Post, 4/96) Religion*

Deepak Chopra, author of *Quantum Healing*, has developed a strong following of believers among physicians as well as laymen. Chopra was a practicing internist in Hollywood, Florida, from **1955 to 1986**, and now combines his medical advice with Indian metaphysics. Chopra claims that meditation, the right diet and a Westernized version of Hindu mysticism can prevent or even reverse disease. He is considered the mainstay of New Age healing, which is composed of four categories: physicians (advocating the power of prayer in the treatment of disease); synthesizers (translators of Eastern philosophy to Western applications); visionaries (spiritual mediums who heal through a spirit guide); expressionists (easing disease through thinking). To some the

combination of faith and healing is not so much a novelty as a welcome recapitulation of the last Western tradition to see them as part of one overarching cosmology. Says Sister Judian Breitenbach, a Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ nun who heads the Healing Arts Center in Mishawaka, Illinois: "We're moving toward the integration of the East and the West, and it's happening through health care." A fan of Chopra's, she sees no conflicts between the new and old age ... `people are so uptight about this kind of thing. We used to call it trust in God."

*(Time, 6/24/96)*

### **One Hundred Years Ago**

"Electrician Thomas A. Edison has developed the "Roentgen ray" or "X-ray" to such a degree that in a recent experiment he was able with his naked eye to look through an eighteen-inch block of yellow pine and see the outlines of his fingers . . . .

"Professors Pratt and Wrightman have conceived that these penetrating rays might be used not only in locating disease but also in killing disease by killing the disease germ."

(R1969)