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A Tribute to Eric Harry Shallcross

Russell Collins

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News and Notes

ERIC HARRY SHALLCROSS **(1937 - 2016)**

It is with great sadness we report the death of Eric Harry Shallcross on 17th March, 2016.

Harry was a committed member of the Melbourne Congregation, where he enjoyed the Bible Studies and talks, and was always a clear thinking contributor to the discussions. His study of the Bible and the messages that he found within its pages were the rules by which he lived, and it was his strong Christian faith that sustained him during his final illness.

Harry was an active participant in the youth group study meetings in the 1950s and 60s. He was also one of the original organisers of our annual Bible Study Conferences and Camps, along with his father and Harry Winbush. He was instrumental in finding our original venue at Yarra Junction in 1976, and those who attended these camps will have many happy memories of times of great friendship and fellowship.

Harry and his late father, Will, established the New Covenant News in 1979, with Harry as the inaugural editor. He continued in this rôle, with help from his wife Shirley, until last year. He initiated contact with Christians in overseas countries through the Newsletter and the Internet, and he sent out publications and organised answers to questions when these were received through the internet contacts.

We benefited from Harry's accounting and business qualifications following the death of Harry Winbush in 1990, and Harry continued to look after the affairs and finances of the Christian Bible Students and the New Covenant Fellowship, a separate fund dedicated to finance the publication of pamphlets and books for the exposition of Biblical teachings, until last year when he could not continue.

Harry was a devoted family man and, with Shirley, gave his children, Linda, Craig and Dale, his daughters-in-law, Marina and Liz, and his grandchildren, a firm foundation of love and support throughout a loving marriage of more than fifty years.

Harry's faithfulness and devotion are a great example to all of us, and he will be greatly missed. The rewards due to him are in the Lord's hands, so we know that all that is just and righteous will be accomplished, for the Lord is the righteous judge, as the sacred Scriptures tell us.

Russell Collins



WHAT SHOULD CHRISTIANS HOPE FOR?

Paper given by Linton Roe at the Autumn Conference

"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

Knowing that the Scriptures are written to provide us with encouragement and hope, I would like to present a summary of some key verses on hope.

Introduction

Human beings hope for many things: long life, health, wealth, a family, friends, a career, recognition, a car, a nice house, or the satisfaction of having made some meaningful contribution to society.

In Australia, many people hope for what they can achieve in this life. Many completely avoid any mention of whether there might be any hope beyond this life.

We have had a number of friends who have been in and out of hospital over the last few months, being treated for cancer. Two of them have passed away in the last month. I find it curious, and somewhat challenging, that discussions with the medical staff, family and friends are usually centred around how the latest symptom would be treated, with an unspoken implication that 'all will be well when we have done this'. Many people seem to avoid, at any time, discussing or stating that the disease may be incurable by any current medical techniques, and that we should hope and pray for God's strength during this time of trial while looking forward to a future life where these current difficulties are not even worth remembering.

1 Peter 3:15 exhorts us to know what we hope for, and to be ready to confess it; *"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."* In the spirit of this verse, I also wanted to have an answer, should anyone ask me about the hope I have. I therefore wanted to find out for myself some of the key verses in the Bible that give us a hope for the future.

Since we will be discussing the Christian hope and how to defend it over the next three days, it is probably useful to define the word 'hope' at the outset. Hope can be used as a noun or as a verb. My dictionary gives the primary meaning of the noun as 'a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen'. In a similar vein, the verb describes when we 'want something to happen or be the case'.

The New Bible Dictionary (1996) helps us understand how the word 'hope' is applied in the Bible: 'Hope, it would seem, is a psychological necessity, if man is to envisage the future at all. Even if there are no rational grounds for it, man still continues to hope. Very naturally such hope, even when it appears to be justified, is transient and illusory ... The Bible sometimes uses hope in the conventional sense. The ploughman, for example, should plough in hope (1 Corinthians 9:10), for it is the hope of reward that sweetens labour. But for the most part the hope with which the Bible is concerned is something very different; and in comparison with it other hope is scarcely recognized as hope. The majority of secular thinkers in the ancient world did not regard hope as a virtue, but merely as a temporary illusion; and Paul was giving an accurate description of pagans when he said they had no hope (Ephesians 2:12; cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13), the fundamental reason for this being that they were 'without God'.

Where there is a belief in the living God, who acts and intervenes in human life and who can be trusted to implement His promises, hope in the specifically Biblical sense becomes possible. Such hope is not a matter of temperament, nor is it conditioned by prevailing circumstances or any human possibilities. It does not depend upon what a man possesses, upon what he may be able to do for himself, nor upon what any other human being may do for him. ... Biblical hope is inseparable, therefore, from faith in God. Because of what God has done in the past, particularly in preparing for the coming of Christ, and because of what God has done and is now doing through Christ, the Christian dares to expect future blessings at present invisible (2 Corinthians 1:10).'

So we see that the Christian's hope of future blessings is inseparably tied to a belief in God, and in His ability to bring about what He has promised. It is a future-oriented state of mind. So what, exactly, should we hope for? I have chosen a few texts to illustrate some of the things I hope for.

1. A Restored Earth

"The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God. Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, 'Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.' Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where

jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow. And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it. No lion will be there, nor will any ferocious beast get up on it; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, and the ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away." (Isaiah 35: 1 to 10).

The key items to hope for from this text in Isaiah 35 include:

- * The healing of the world;
- * The wilderness blossoming and water gushing forth;
- * Blindness to be removed;
- * The deaf will hear;
- * The lame will be healed;
- * The speechless will shout for joy;
- * A highway of holiness will exist;
- * No ferocious beast will be found there;
- * The redeemed of the Lord will enter Zion;
- * Sorrow and sighing will cease;

Now some New Testament texts:

"He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets." (Acts 3:21);

"The last enemy to be destroyed is death." (1 Corinthians 15:26);

"Because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God." (Romans 8:21);

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'" (Revelation 21: 1 to 4).

In this last text, we see not only a restored earth but also the removal of death, mourning, crying and pain. What great joy there will be when mankind is resurrected, families and friends are re-united and death no longer threatens relationships.

2. Justice Will be Done

"Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. In his name the nations will put their hope." (Isaiah 42: 1 to 4, quoted in Matthew 12: 18 to 21).

"And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly." (Luke 18: 7 and 8).

3. Evil Influences Removed

"He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended." (Revelation 20: 2 and 3).

"And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown." (Revelation 20:7).

4. Peace on Earth

"He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore." (Isaiah 2:4).

5. The Resurrection of ALL the Dead

"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment." (John 5: 28 and 29).

"But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him." (1 Corinthians 15: 20 to 23).

6. Everlasting Life for those who Believe

"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt." (Daniel 12:2).

"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes

in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." (John 3: 14 to 17).

7. The Divine Nature

"Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires." (2 Peter 1:3).

8. Jesus as God's appointed Ruler

"For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet." (1 Corinthians 15:25).

"Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth." (Revelation 1:5).

9. Christians to See Jesus, be like Him and be with Him forever

"Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." (1 John 3:2).

"After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4: 17 and 18).

10. Believers to be Members of God's Family, Sons of God and Joint-Heirs with Christ

"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." (John 1: 12 and 13).

"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:26).

"So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir." (Galatians 4:7).

These are just a few of the many verses that will likely be discussed over the course of our conference.

I pray that you may receive God's blessings through meditating further on these beautiful promises, and that you will have encouragement and hope at all times in your life. I also pray that these thoughts will help to provide you with *"an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have"* (1 Peter 3:15).



LOST IN TRANSLATION

(Part 2)

Continuation of talk given by Merv Buckmaster

Introduction

The exhortation from the apostle Paul to "*rightly divide the word of truth*" in 2 Timothy 2:15 behoves every Bible student to be diligent in their efforts as a workman seeking out the harmony of the scriptures in order to gain God's approval, which is shown by spiritual guidance in that pursuit of knowledge, the accurate knowledge to which Paul alerted Timothy in his previous letter (1 Timothy 2:4).

There is difficulty in translating from one language to another, particularly with respect to the Bible manuscripts which are old, are not the originals but copies that have had words or phrases added, are biased by the translators' own beliefs and prejudices, particularly by the influence of pagan creeds, and suffer the linguistic strictures of punctuation and paraphrasing.

Despite these complications, God has sent out an invitation to search for His truth, posing a challenge to the believer to come to the most accurate translation in contemporary language, thus to gain the proper appreciation of what was written, to be followed by the further challenge to apply it to everyday lives.

The following are examples from the King James Version of where I believe the meaning has been lost in the translation of 1611. They are offered for your consideration.

John 3:16

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

The key word in this verse is "*in*", translated from the Greek word 'eis'. The Greek word for 'in' is 'en', and translated correctly, 'eis' means 'into'. The correction is important because 'into' has the significance of 'making a commitment to', thus the verse should read as, "*whosoever believes into him*". The full meaning, in the style of the Amplified Version, is given by, "*whosoever believes in and makes a commitment to him, should not perish*".

The same inaccuracy occurs in John 14:1, where Jesus told the disciples, "*Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me*". Much more strength is given to his admonition when rendered as, "*ye believe into God; believe also into me*".

And later, in John 16: 8 and 9, he said that the Comforter "... will reprove the world of sin ... because they believe not on me". This should read, "because they believe not into me".

And again in Acts 10:43, "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" is more accurately translated as, "whosoever believeth into him".

John 5: 28 and 29

These verses have Jesus' profound words that "... for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his (my) voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation". The last word here, "damnation", is from the Greek word 'krisis' which corresponds to the English word 'crisis'. It is incorrect to shift the meaning of the word from crisis to damnation, and the versions which have "judgement" are closer to the truth, although a more accurate rendition is 'judging', that is, "a resurrection of judging", which is in accord with the understanding that the day of judgement will be a process taking up most of the kingdom age.

Acts 13:43

"Now when the congregation was broken up..."

This is the only occurrence where the Greek word 'ecclesia' (Strong 1577) is translated as congregation, referring to believers collectively. When Tyndale made his translation he understood from other passages that the congregation was a democratic and egalitarian gathering of sincere followers of Jesus and his gospel message.

In more than seventy other occurrences of 'ecclesia' it is translated as 'church', which is appropriate in most instances, although 'congregation' as Tyndale meant it to be, is better in many of those places. But the Roman Catholic Church has established itself as an hierarchical, self-serving and authoritarian organisation, distorting the meaning that Luke intended in his gospel. And most Protestant churches have followed that style to a lesser degree, resulting in a significant divergence from the truth, resulting from the disregard of the true meaning lost in translation.

1 Timothy 2:6

"Who gave himself a ransom for all ..."

In this verse, which refers to Jesus as the mediator between God and men, the word "ransom" is translated from the Greek 'antilutron' which Strong (487) defines as a 'redemption price'. It is the only occurrence of the word in the New Testament. The word is taken by some to mean 'corresponding price', since Adam and Jesus were both men, and thus Jesus' sacrifice could be regarded as the price paid for, and corresponding to Adam's life lost through

disobedience. The correspondence is tenuous because Adam was created while Jesus was born of a woman, and the focus of Paul's letter is the ransom as set out in the gospels (Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45).

A ransom is the price set to buy back, or redeem, something lost or stolen, and is independent of the value of what was lost. That is, the price does not correspond to what was lost, but is judged to be sufficient for its redemptive purpose. Translated as 'ransom' gives the correct meaning, although 'antilutron' is different from the word 'lutron' rendered as 'ransom' in Matthew and Mark. This is a case where the meaning is not lost in translation, but is obscured by mis-interpretation.

1 Timothy 5:1

Another example of the proper meaning being lost in translation is the Greek word 'presbyter' (Strong 4245), which Tyndale set down as an **elder**, a person deemed as the wisest member of a congregation. The word is rendered as "elder" in 1 Timothy 5:1, viz. "*Rebuke not an elder but intreat him ...*", and in the plural form, the Jewish elders in Acts 4:8; "*Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel ...*". Another example of the plural, the elders of the church, is in Acts 20: 16 and 17; "*For Paul ... from Miletus (he) sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church (congregation)*".

In their contrariness, the churches of Christendom prefer the word **'priest'**, apparently to justify the appointment of men to administer the traditions and political Church-serving ordinances that maintain their power over their congregations. The references to priests throughout the New Testament are made specifically to the high priest (Strong 749), and to the priests (Strong 2409), who were appointed under the terms of the Law Covenant. Christendom seems to have adopted forcefully that old system of church organisation which was annulled as part of that old covenant.

The qualifications for duty as leaders in a Christian congregation were set out by Paul in his first letter to Timothy, and they bear no similarity to the pomp and presumptuous activity of priests in the churches of Christendom.

Matthew 5:45

"And sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

The Greek word here for "*just*" is 'dikahyos' (Strong 1342), which means equitable, upright, and by implication, righteous. As 'unjust' is the opposite of 'just' in English, so 'adekia' is the opposite of 'dikayos' in Greek. Early in this verse Jesus pointed out that the sun rises on the evil and the good, showing the contrast between people's natures, and that God's laws of nature are impartial in their effects on mankind; and he could have used the same words implying impartiality to refer to the rain.

In English the word 'just' is equivalent to 'good', and 'unjust' is equivalent to 'evil'. In Greek the same situation of equivalence applies, thus it could be construed that a different translation is needed for 'just and unjust', and the phrase is sometimes rendered as "*and sendeth rain on the justified and the unjustified*". Since only God knows who are justified and unjustified, sending the rain on the good and the evil agrees with His impartiality in allowing the sun to shine on them all.

There is a contrast to this in **1 Peter 3:18**.

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust", where Peter is referring to Christ and the rest of mankind, respectively, and 'dikayos' and 'adekia' are also used in the original text. In this instance 'just' is inappropriate because Christ did not sin and did not need to be justified, in contrast to Adam's race; and even "*the justified for the unjustified*", as above, is inadequate. The more fitting translation takes in the implied meaning of 'righteous', thus, "*Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous*".

Colossians 3:1

"If ye then be risen with Christ ..."

Jesus had been raised many years before these words were written, thus for the Colossians, and everyone else since, to be risen with Christ was, and is a physical impossibility. Paul was exhorting them to "*set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth*" (Colossians 3:2). He reminded them that "*Ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands ... buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of ... God*" (Colossians 3: 11 and 12), all of which are characteristics of the people of spiritual Israel. The Greek word translated "*risen*" is 'suneegertheete' (Strong 4891), and its meaning is to revive spiritually, thus the verse is focussing on a spiritual revival.

1 Timothy 6:20 (and Daniel 1:4)

"Oppositions of science falsely so called."

The Greek word translated science is 'gnosis' (Strong 1108), which means knowledge. Since science as it is defined at the present time had not been developed when Paul wrote to Timothy, contemporary science is not intended in this verse, and from the historical records of that time it is thought that Paul warned him about ideas contrary to his Christian teaching from the gnostics, who claimed to have knowledge given to them by divine inspiration. The warning was not against empirical science of this modern era.

That warning is reflected in Paul's exhortations to beware of Judaising teachers, and Peter's warnings of false prophets, in their other epistles.

The word 'science' also appears in Daniel 1:4 where the Hebrew word 'maddah' (Strong 4093) has a different meaning, that of intelligence or awareness.

Hebrews 11:1

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

The basic teaching of the New Covenant, that justification is by faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, makes 'faith' the key element of the gospel message. Thus it is helpful to have faith defined so clearly in this verse. The understanding that faith is an exercise of heart and mind, emotional and intellectual, that is, it is a mental attitude which has no physical substance or tangible evidence, has evoked different translations of the Greek words. The NAS puts the concept into this mental perspective with the version, *"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen"*. This is supported by the Diaglott, and is a more powerful translation. Thus we can accept the evidence of the biblical record and be absolutely sure that what God has promised will be brought to completion at a time of His choosing.

1 John 5:7

"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."

These words are not found in manuscripts older than the fifth century, and to quote the Diaglott, 'are therefore evidently spurious.' This is apparently another example of words added to the original text.

Revelation 1: 6

"And hath made us kings and priests unto God."

Upon first inspection of this verse it could be inferred that the dual authority of king and priest will be granted to the faithful of the gospel age, as it was for Melchisedec, and for Christ who will be both king and high priest during the kingdom age. This authority of king and priest for the church of God seems to be supported by Revelation 5:10, viz. *"And has made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth"*. However, there will be only one kingdom in the age to come because God will make all of earth's nations subservient to the Lord, therefore there will be only one king to rule them all.

The Israelites had David as their king, and Christ has been appointed to take that throne when his kingdom rule on earth begins (Luke 1:32). In Revelation 19:16 Jesus has been appointed *"King of kings, and Lord of lords"*. All human beings with earthly authority will be subjected to him as the only King. The administration of that kingdom will be shared with the ancient worthies

who are to be "*princes in all the earth*". (Psalm 45:16). Just as kingly duties are delegated to princes, so will priestly duties be delegated by the high priest to those who serve him, a privilege promised to the church. The inconsistency in these verses between one king and many kings is resolved by Exodus 19:6, where God told Moses, "*and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests*", and is supported by the NIV rendition of Revelation 1:6 (and Revelation 5:10) as, "*And has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father*".

MISCELLANY

Then there are verses which, being couched in English of centuries ago, do not ring true under scrutiny when considered in the light of contemporary knowledge.

For example, "*bodily exercise profiteth little*" (1Timothy 4:8), which appears to decry physical exertion. It is now well understood that some physical exercise is quite beneficial to good health, although the over-indulgence in sporting activities is deplorable. The Diaglott makes the verse, "*profiteth a little*", and while the KJV translation is not significantly inaccurate, the reasonable interpretation is that exercise is profitable for a little time, and even if that time may be seventy years it is still small when compared to the benefits of piety for which God may grant eternal life.

Another case is the dramatic warning from Peter that "*the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Peter 5:8). Animal studies have found that it is the lionesses which do the hunting, and they do not roar when they are looking for prey, but slink through the grass as quietly as possible. The lion roars as a threatening gesture when defending his territory. Perhaps the lions of Peter's day were different from the lions of our day, but Peter was giving a warning to be vigilant to resist the subtleties of temptation which is implied in the consequences of disobedience of Adam and Eve, and in James' plea to resist the Devil (James 4:7), warnings which should not be ignored.

The importance of punctuation, despite the observation that the old writings do not use such a linguistic device, is exemplified by the words of Jesus to the thief at the scene of the crucifixion. In Luke 23:43 the KJV has "*Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise*". The account in all the gospels is that upon his death Jesus was placed in a sealed tomb and did not re-appear until three days later. Therefore he was not in paradise that day, the 'today' of the crucifixion, thus nullifying his promise to the thief on the cross beside him. Since the translators thought it justifiable to place a comma between "*thee*" and "*today*", resulting in an unsatisfactory meaning to Jesus' words, it is also justifiable to shift the comma to follow "*today*". The verse then becomes, "*Verily I say unto thee today, shalt thou be with me in paradise*", placing that meeting on to a future time, which is in agreement with the promise to all those who are granted salvation.

A MATTER OF INTERPRETATION

Furthermore, there are passages where their symbolism is disregarded and they are taken literally, accepting the accuracy of the translation but ignoring the need for interpretation.

An example is John 6: 53 and 54, in which Jesus said to the Jews, "*Except ye eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life*". Even the Jews questioned the reality of the Lord's words, asking "*How can this man give us his flesh to eat?*" And yet the Roman Catholic Church pretends to do just that in the rite of the mass, an activity contradicting, and condemned by the statement by Paul in Hebrews 7:27 that Christ's sacrifice was complete in itself, given for all sins for all time, needing no contribution from any other source.

Another example is in Mark 1: 14 and 15. "*Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand*".

There is general agreement that the phrases "*the kingdom of God*" as used in here and in John, and "*the kingdom of heaven*" as used in Matthew, refer to the same thing, which, as a first consideration, is the realm or situation where divine rule is absolute; now in God's dwelling place, and promised for earth at a time to come. That kingdom was prophesied in Daniel 7: 13 and 14, and in the gospel accounts Jesus proclaimed that it "*... is at hand ...*", (KJV, NAS) or, as in other versions, "*... is near*" (NIV, NLT).

The Lord's words were spoken more than five hundred years after the prophecy in Daniel, so for the Jews the kingdom was nearer to their time. But nearly two thousand years have passed since then and the kingdom, Jesus' reign on earth, still has not begun in full measure. It seems that this long period of time has prompted some translators to adjust, in some places, the wording "*kingdom of God*" or "*kingdom of heaven*" to refer to Jesus himself, thus, for Mark 1: 14 and 15, "*... Jesus came ... preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, the representative of God's kingdom is nearby*" or, "*... God's royal majesty has approached*" (Diaglott). Jesus himself was with them in person.

However, it must be noted that the proximity of the kingdom is qualified by "*... the time is fulfilled*", and that time was the fulfilment of the prophecy, which told of God's promise to send the Messiah to redeem the faithful of the nation, despite their apostasy, by calling them to repentance through John the Baptist, and establishing a New Covenant, revealed in the gospel message.

The Jews had abandoned God as their king and God promised a new King to take David's throne and that king would be Jesus, but not a king to wage war to free the Jews from Roman domination. Jesus had come to set up the kingdom of God among men, as a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5), offered firstly to the Jews then to all the other nations of mankind, by preaching the gospel of reconciliation to bring about a change in their attitude to worship, with God's laws written on their hearts and in their minds, as Jeremiah had proclaimed centuries before.

God had determined that the time for the change in dispensation from the Law Covenant to the New Covenant had come; its time was fulfilled, and the reigning power of God as exercised by Jesus was being explained to them, coming near and into effect for those who would listen to the message. The kingdom of God on earth began when Jesus was raised to be given God's authority to rule in the hearts of those who would commit themselves to serving God through faith in the sacrifice that was made to open the way for reconciliation, and so become the spiritual subjects of that kingdom which Jesus told them was at hand.

While there is no reason to consider that "... *kingdom of God* ..." to be a case of inaccurate translation, it illustrates the importance of interpretation where it preserves the harmony of scripture.

With each passing day the full establishment of the kingdom of God becomes closer, and is only as far away as a lifetime on earth, even if that lifetime was lived when Jesus spoke with the disciples or is lived as the gospel age draws to its close.

Another example is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke chapter 16. Because it is a parable and is not an account of a real situation, it has a symbolic meaning, but the Roman Catholic church uses it, together with other verses, irrationally, as the basis for their doctrine of hell-fire torment, a teaching that is in stark opposition to the benevolence of a God of love, and contrary to sound doctrine.

An instance of the difficulty of translation is the Greek word 'parousia' usually rendered as 'coming' (Matthew 24:3), when to be more accurate it should be 'presence' as in Philippians 2:12. However, since the Lord is not actually present, he must be coming, that is in transit before his arrival, unless a spiritual presence is intended. When he does arrive his presence will be revealed, which will be different from what he revealed in the 'apokalupsis', the book of Revelation. His coming will conclude with his appearing, the 'epiphania' of 1 Timothy 6:14. All these descriptive terms are aspects of the Lord's second advent, portrayed through the richness of the Greek language, and thus they broaden the nature of the enlightenment God has in store to be made manifest on that occasion.

A similar breadth of meaning devolves on the words 'hell', 'hades' and 'gehenna'. Their meanings depend upon their contexts, since all of them refer to the grave: hell being a covered place, out of sight but still present (see Matthew 10:28); hades is the other side of the river Styx, the river of death from Greek mythology (see Luke 10:15); and gehenna signifies destruction by fire in the valley of Hinnom, thus symbolising non-existence (also Matthew 10:28). Thus for hell, hades and gehenna, and sheol in the Old Testament, the essential meaning is death, the state of non-existence.

There is also the word "*hell*" in 2 Peter 2:4 translated from the Greek word 'tartaroo', a place of uncertain location where God has cast the "*angels that sinned*".'

Another example where interpretation is a valuable adjunct to translation is the word 'new', from the Greek word 'prosphatos' (Strong 4372) meaning 'recently made', where, in Hebrews 10: 19 and 20 Paul's description of reconciliation through faith in Christ's sacrifice is enhanced when the meaning of 'new' is expanded to include freshness and vigour. Peter recognised this when he addressed the people in Solomon's porch at the Temple, calling for repentance which would be acceptable through Christ, who brought a time of refreshing (Acts 3:19) through the New Covenant, the freshness and vigour of which still applies although it is two thousand years old.

Interpretation also helps the appreciation of the word 'race'. The usual concept of a race is a competitive event for speed to a finish. This is put in doubt by Ecclesiastes 9:11 where Solomon states that "*the race is not to the swift*", implying that speed is not necessary to win; and by 1 Corinthians 9:24 where Paul points out that each race has only one winner, implying that if God wants 144,000 winners for His nation of priests there has to be the same number of races. This idea is acceptable if each believer runs an individual race without competitors. However, in Hebrews 12:1 we are exhorted to "*run with patience the race that is set before us*", again implying that haste is counterproductive, so that for the believer it is not a race in the usual sense, and the meaning is clarified by interpreting it as a lifelong course of action that has to be pursued with persistence and stamina.

CONTINUUM

It is usually regarded to be appropriate to conclude any theological dissertation with the word 'amen.', the simple word of closure. But in this case it is more suitable to use 'to be continued', because there can be no end to the search to recover what has been lost in translation, that is, not "*until the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea*" (Habakkuk 2:14).



PETER'S CONFESSION OF FAITH

Review of the study on April 17th, 2016

Introduction

During his ministry, when Jesus was asked by the Canaanite woman to free her daughter from an unclean spirit, He declared to His disciples *"I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* (Matthew 15:24). Earlier He had commissioned His disciples to *"... go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* (Matthew 10:6). This dedication to His work was a continuation of God's favour to the Israelites, and when the apostles continued that work, Peter accused the Jews that they *"... denied the Holy One and just ... and killed the Prince of life, whom God has raised from the dead"*.

Later on, Paul and Barnabas told a crowd of Jews that, *"It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you, but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."* (Acts 13:46).

James confirmed the change of God's dispensation from one nation to all nations by reminding them that *"Simeon (Peter) hath declared how God for the first time did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name."* (Acts 15:14).

Since Jesus instructed the disciples to *"Go ye therefore and teach all nations ..."* (Matthew 28:19), God's call to reconciliation through the terms of the New Covenant has an over-arching criterion that was revealed in the passages Matthew 16: 13 to 20, Mark 8: 27 to 30 and Luke 9: 18 to 21.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all recorded the confession of Peter; but only Matthew reported our Lord's response to it.

Peter's Confession of Christ

Matthew 16: 13 to 20 (KJV)

13. *When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*
14. *And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.*
15. *He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?*
16. *And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*
17. *And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*
18. *And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

19. *And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*
20. *Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.*

From verse thirteen in Matthew we learn that Jesus and His disciples had gone to the region of Caesarea Philippi, and from verse twenty seven in Mark that they were on the road, travelling. Luke added that Jesus was in prayer with His Father. He then asked His disciples what people were saying about Him. In the NIV account in Matthew the question is "*Who do people say that the Son of Man is?*", suggesting that the Son of Man could be another person somewhere else, and that Jesus would like to know about him.

In both Mark and Luke the question is, "*Who do people say that I am?*", indicating that Jesus made a direct request for information about Himself. The KJV in Matthew includes the "*I*", so that Jesus was asking about Himself, and calling Himself the Son of Man. In this first question that Jesus asked, the Greek text in the Diaglott has the pronoun which is why the KJV also has "*I*", since they are both translated from Greek manuscripts of similar vintage. However, more authentic Greek texts do not have the "*I*", which is why the NIV and other recent translations don't have the pronoun. The KJV may have added it as a means of clarification.

The phrase 'Son of Man' is used many times in the Old Testament, usually to refer to a member of the human race. The example was given of the call to Ezekiel in Ezekiel 2:1 to 3 (KJV). "*And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me. And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day.*" When God called Ezekiel He did so by calling him a 'Son of Man' rather than using his name.

In the New Testament the phrase is applied only to Jesus, and used by Him as a description of Himself. The significance was thought to be that Jesus was a member of the human race, born of a woman, even though He did not have a human father. Being born of a woman He took on the nature of human beings, and understood the infirmities that we all face.

It seemed that Jesus derived the title from the vision given to Daniel of Jesus in His future glory; "*I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should*

serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.' (Daniel 7: 13 and 14; KJV). This is the first time the phrase is used of Jesus, and is a prophecy of Him in the future. Jesus may have adopted the title from Daniel and used it to refer to Himself.

In verse fourteen of the Matthew account the disciples responded to Jesus' question by telling Him what they had heard people say about Him.

All three accounts give the same list in the same order, starting with John the Baptist. *"They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.'"* (NIV).

Why some people might have thought that John the Baptist, or Jeremiah or any other of the prophets had returned to life seemed difficult to understand, although it was probable that they knew the prophecy of Malachi that Elijah would come first.

The prophecy is in Malachi 4:5; *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:"* (KJV). This was considered to give them a reason for thinking that Jesus might be Elijah, but, as is shown from Matthew seventeen, they misunderstood the prophecy.

"The disciples asked him, 'Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?' Jesus replied, 'To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.' Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist." (Matthew 17: 10 to 13; NIV).

Thus at that point the disciples understood that John the Baptist was the one who should come and prepare the way for God to offer the means of reconciliation to mankind, so that the prophecy was not a reference to Jesus. Jesus then pressed the disciples further, and asked them who **they** thought He was.

Mark and Luke recorded that they responded by saying that He was the Messiah, while Matthew added that He was the Son of the living God. *" 'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' "* (Matthew 16: 15 and 16; NIV).

Although the account is that Peter made the reply; it was thought that he was speaking on behalf of all the disciples. They all knew Jesus to be the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

In this verse the NIV translates the Greek word 'Christos' by using the Hebrew word 'Messiah', while the KJV transliterates the Greek into the English word 'Christ'. Both have the meaning of 'the anointed (one)'.

It was noted that while Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of Man, Peter referred to him as the Son of God. Jesus was alluding to His humanity, while Peter was alluding to His origin in having God as His Father.

In the next verse Jesus replied to Peter's statement. *"Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.' "* (Matthew 16:17; NIV).

Jesus' response to Peter was praise indeed; Peter was blessed. References were made to Peter's future responsibility as the leader of the disciples. It was he who stood on the day of Pentecost and explained the prophecy of Joel about God's Spirit being poured out (Acts 2: 14 to 32). It was Peter who was given the vision of the animals and told not to call anything impure that God has made clean (Acts 10: 9 to 16). It was Peter who was sent to Cornelius, the first Gentile to have the word preached to him (Acts 10: 17 to 48).

It was asked how God revealed the knowledge that Jesus was His Son, that is, before Pentecost and the giving of the Holy Spirit. Before that time Jesus had authorised His disciples to go into the world and preach, and to assist them they were given a measure of the spirit. *"Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness."* (Matthew 10:1; NIV).

We also understood that the disciples were men of faith. Through their faith they pleased God. It is by faith that we please God.

"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." (Hebrews 11:6; NIV). Part of the reward is a revelation about God and His plan for salvation.

The importance of Peter's statement concerning Jesus was found in Romans 10: 8 and 9; *"But what does it say? 'The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,' that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."* (NIV).

Two points are made in these verses:

1. We are to declare with our mouths that Jesus is Lord;
2. We are to believe in our hearts that Jesus has been raised from the dead.

Peter did both: he declared aloud that Jesus is God's anointed one, and he believed in his heart in the resurrection, having declared himself to be a witness of the event. (Acts 3:15).

In verse eighteen of Matthew 16 Jesus made a play on Peter's name. *"And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it"* (NIV).

In the Greek language Peter is 'petros', and means a detached stone. The Greek word for rock in the verse is 'petra' and means the bedrock. The bedrock on which Jesus is building His church is the revelation by God through His Spirit that Jesus is His anointed one, and that through Him will come salvation.

Verses seventeen and eighteen should be read together to get the connection. *"And Jesus answered and said unto him, 'Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'"*

By reading only verse eighteen the antecedent of upon what Jesus will build His church appears to be Peter. However, by taking the two verses together, the reason that Peter could have known who Jesus was, was through the revelation by God.

Nothing in the physical world can reveal anything that is spiritual, such as the knowledge that Jesus is the anointed one and the Son of God. Neither is it possible to reason with the mind and arrive at such knowledge.

This is the importance of the statement that Jesus made in these verses, and what was true of Peter and the other disciples is also true of us, in that it is God Himself who will reveal who Jesus is to those who will become the members of His church. Without this fundamental knowledge no-one can be part of the church that is to be built upon the bedrock, the Son of God.

It has been expounded, quite incorrectly, by the Roman Catholic Church that Jesus told Peter that He would build the church upon Peter himself. This was refuted by Paul in Ephesians 2: 19 to 21, *"Now therefore ye are ... of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."* (KJV).

Peter declared his knowledge of this. *"Wherefore it is contained in scripture, 'Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.'" (1 Peter 2: 6; KJV),* thus referring

to the prophecy in Isaiah 28:16, and to Jesus' words about the Jewish rejection of the corner stone in Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:10 and Luke 20:17. This was confirmed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:11, "*For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.*" (NIV).

Peter was commissioned by the Lord to preach to both Jews and Gentiles. He was not appointed as the founder of the church, which would mean usurping Jesus' place and authority.

In verse nineteen of Matthew 16 Jesus declared the power that would be given to the disciples. That was to be the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, to enable them to heal, to cast out evil spirits, to cope with persecution and to preach the truth of the gospel message to the extent of speaking in and understanding foreign languages.

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:19; NIV).

Keys are used to unlock and thus enable entry. The keys of the kingdom unlock the means of entry into the kingdom. What needs to be unlocked to open the way into the kingdom is the gospel truth. The apostles were given the gospel message to be preached to all people. Those who heard and accepted that message had the means of entry through the knowledge that Jesus is the anointed Son of God and the one who gave His life as the redeeming sacrifice for the human race.

What the disciples bound or what they loosed on earth, would also be bound or loosed in heaven. Those who were bound were bound because they accepted the gospel, or loosed from being part of the kingdom because of unbelief. Jesus stated that the disciples would be supported in the work they were to do in preaching the gospel.

And from John 20:23; "*If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.*" (NIV). If the disciples forgave people their sins then their sins were also forgiven by God.

Another example of the power that was to be granted to the apostles was in the matter of Ananias and his wife Sapphira, found in chapter five of Acts. They both endeavoured to lie to Peter about the amount of money they had received for some land they sold. It was not Peter they were lying to, but the Holy Spirit. Peter saw through their deception and pronounced that they would die for their deceit.

The gift of the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit was a special privilege for the apostles, deemed necessary by Jesus to establish the gospel message of the New Covenant in the Roman world from where it would spread to all the people of earth during the centuries of the gospel age. However, that power would cease with the deaths of the apostles as shown by 1 Corinthians 13: 8; *"Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease, where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away."* (NIV).

Summary

Jesus asked the disciples about His identity as a test of faith, and made clear to them that He would empower them to continue preaching the gospel message in order to bring others from all nationalities into that faith to build up a new, spiritual Israel according to God's purposes.

The faith of the apostles was demonstrated by their actions recorded by Luke in the book of Acts, and by the epistles of Peter, James, John and Paul. It was the latter apostle who set down faith as the basis of reconciliation in chapter eleven of Hebrews, pointing out that God's favour was given to the faithful patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament, and that it would be given to the faithful of the New Testament times.

Before Jesus came to change the dispensation of God's grace, faith in God as the creator and heavenly Father identified those who gained His favour. Under the terms of the New Covenant it is faith in Jesus and His sacrifice as the ransom that enables God to deal with those who call upon Him for strength, comfort and guidance; threefold assistance through the trials of living in a Godless society, and by that help, being convinced of the rewards promised to the faithful of all ages.

Conclusion

God's purpose to choose a people to serve Him as joint-heirs with Jesus began with Jesus as the *"... author and finisher of our faith."* (Hebrews 12: 2; KJV). Only Jesus has God's authority to give the strength, comfort and guidance through a measure of the Holy Spirit to those who ask, believing in the ministry, sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus, the foundation stone of God's spiritual house, and it is He, not any earthly organisation, who will make that selection for God, when He returns at God's appointed time.

The rock is the fundamental confession of faith, *"... the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."* (Hebrews 11:1).

The stone is the believer who has experienced a spiritual revival (Colossians 3:1), a living stone in the household of God (1 Peter 2:5).



NEWS AND NOTES

LYREBIRD PARK CONFERENCE 2016

Once more this year our annual conference was held in the peaceful surrounds of Lyrebird Park in Yellingbo, from Saturday 2nd to Monday 4th April, where a pleasant time of fellowship was enjoyed by all.

The theme for the conference was 'Defending the Christian Hope', with seven presentations on a diverse range of topics related to this theme. There were also Bible studies from passages in Romans and 1 Peter, as well as morning devotions and the usual question study. There were two Sunday School groups, attended by a total of nine children. The adults enjoyed watching the short movies the children produced to illustrate some of Jesus' parables. (These are available for viewing on our website <http://www.cbsm.org.au/Gallery.htm>).

Thanks to the organisation of many people behind the scenes, the weekend was a restful break from busy lives for those who attended, and there were plenty of opportunities for informal fellowship and discussion, as well as the formal programme. We thank our heavenly Father for this opportunity to worship Him and spend some time apart from the world.

Unfortunately, due to declining numbers, we are unable to return to Lyrebird Park, so our 2017 conference will be held at the Comfort Inn Main Lead in Ballarat, from Friday 7th until Sunday 9th April. Further details will follow, but for now please mark these dates in your diary! We look forward to meeting with all who are able to join us for more spiritual refreshment at next year's conference.



THE NEW COVENANT NEWS

The New Covenant News is compiled by an editor responsible to the Christian Bible Students (Melbourne). The thoughts expressed do not necessarily represent the opinions of all of the members of the group, and readers are requested to heed the words:
“Prove all things” (1 Thessalonians 5:21).



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