

THE WORD OF TRUTH

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Table of Contents

- * God Must Intervene
 - * Judgment
- * The Interpretation of Ephesians
 - * John's Gospel
 - * The Word "Heaven"
- * The Editor To His Friends

GOD MUST INTERVENE

The supreme message of the Bible concerning the future is that God Himself: will break supernaturally into human history and establish with divine omnipotence His benevolent government upon and over this earth. This is so emphatically and eloquently stated in regard to the people of Israel, that it is hard to understand why so many have missed it and why so few believe it. Through the prophet Ezekiel He has declared what Israel can expect when He resumes His dealings with that people.

As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: And I will bring you out from the peoples, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God; And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord. Ezekiel 20:33-38.

Words could not be more emphatic than these. Such words as "as I live" and the eight-fold repetition of "I will" allow for no contingencies. This is the way it is to be whether the people of Israel want it or not. God will do this work, purge out all who resist or oppose, and the result will be that they shall know that He is their Lord. Words such as these speak of divine intervention into the affairs of the people of Israel, with the end in view that God's will will be done among that people. Language could not be more positive. We have here a picture of God breaking supernaturally into

the history .of Israel, establishing with divine omnipotence His rule over them. Nevertheless there are many who do not believe this.

A. C. Gaebelain says of this portion: "In this paragraph we read of their future punishment and also of the mercy which is in store far the believing remnant of the nation in the future restoration."

These words set forth an erroneous idea that characterizes the thinking of the dispensational, premillennial school .of interpretation, of which Gaebelain was a leading writer. Even in the most wonderful promises of future blessing for Israel they can see little but threats of "future punishment" and the blessings promised are limited to "a believing remnant."

However, while the passage quoted from Ezekiel sets forth divine intervention into the affairs .of Israel, this is not limited to that people alone. Israel will have a unique place and fulfill a unique purpose when God governs the earth, but this should not lead us to think that this is, the only nation that is to be governed by Him. It is the declared purpose of our God that some day He will govern the earth and all nations upon it.

Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world (the inhabited earth, wherever men dwell) in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead. Acts 17:31.

The words "judge the world" are indicative of a new order and condition of things upon earth, even as the twelve apostles "sitting on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" certainly indicates a new order and condition of things in Israel. This new condition will be brought about by an act of God, and present conditions under which men live will come to an end and a new order of existence will begin for all men. Here is a description of it.

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's: and He is the governor among the nations. Psalm 22:27, 28.

This passage is one of vast importance. It is a challenge to our faith. Does the reader believe that the time will ever come when every man upon this earth, even these living in the most remote places, shall suddenly be given light from God with the result that he is turned toward God, and that all families of the nations shall bow down before Him?

The Psalms, which is the great prayer and praise book of the time when God governs the earth, is filled with promises such as these. Read for yourself Psalm 9:19, 20; 25:8, 9;33:8;46:8 10; 47:7, 8; 67:1-7; 72:17;19; 76:8; 86:9; 96:10-13; 98:1-4; 102:15-22; 103:19; 105:7; 138:4; 145:1-21; Psalm 150:1-6. Everyone of these passages either have to do with divine intervention or else they set forth results that come from it. Their fulfillment is dependent upon God speaking from heaven and imposing His government upon men. Not *one* of them is dependent upon the personal presence of Christ upon the earth. May God speed the day when we can sing unto the Lord a new song, when we can say:

"Say among the nations that the Lord reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: He shall judge the peoples (plural) righteously. Psalm 96:10.

The End.

JUDGMENT

The Lord Jesus Christ rebuked the Pharisees because they made "the Word of God of none effect" through their traditions. In the present time, in man's handling of God's Word, we have a positive example of the Word being made of none effect by man's traditions in his handling of the word *judgment*. In all theology, almost without exception, the word *judgment* is taken to mean punishment; so much so that this has fixed upon it one definition that makes it a "calamity sent by God by way of recompense for wrongs committed." It has come to mean this in English because men have persisted in using it this way, but it is a very serious error when this is carried into the Word of God. It would be a simple matter to quote numerous writers who have taken passages in the Word and turned promises of infinitely great blessings into dire threats of terrible calamities by reading this false meaning into the word *judgment*. Thus the truth of God is turned into a lie.

Many ministers are prone to use such adjectives as fearful, frightful, and terrible when speaking of the judgments of God. Such language as this does not come from the Word of God. In Scripture we are told that God's judgments are more to be desired "than gold, yea, than much fine gold," that they are "sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" (Psa. 19:10). How can this be true if judgments have to do with punishments, calamities, curses, and woes?

In line with this error the wonderful promise of God in Acts 17:31 that a time will come when God will "judge the world in righteousness" is taken to mean nothing more than that a day will come in which God will pour out wrath upon the wicked for their iniquities. Yet the same men who set forth this idea reveal that they know better, for they give no such meaning to the statement that the twelve apostles "shall sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Likewise the declaration of Isaiah, "when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness", is taken to mean that when God pours out His frightful punishments upon the earth that then the inhabitants of the earth will learn righteousness. Such an interpretation cannot be true as it is denied in other places. In Rev. 16:10, 11 and Rev. 9:20, 21 we are told that when God does pour out His discriminatory punishments upon wicked men that it does not bring them to repentance. We must ever keep in mind that it is only the goodness of God that will lead men to repentance, not His wrath (Rom. 2:4).

The English word *judgment* is found 294 times in the Old Testament as the translation of the Hebrew word *mishpat*, and it cannot be shown that it ever means punishment in a single one of these occurrences. In 118 other occurrences *mishpat* is translated twenty-eight different ways. In view of this wealth of occurrences it is possible for a careful student to discover what the Spirit of God meant by this word from the use that is made of it. I often wonder if there are very many who realize the great wealth of truth that God has given us in the fact that most major words are found in many sentences where the meaning of them is unmistakably clear and where variations and shades can be detected and established.

In the making of dictionaries, this is the way that words are defined. Vast amounts of literature are constantly read by researchers, and as they read they copy on cards every new, interesting or rare word, or peculiar uses of common words, also the sentences in which the words occur. They may collect as many as two, three, or five hundred sentences in which a word occurs, as used by writers and speakers of ability and importance. To define a word the editor will take the group of cards that illustrate its usage. After careful consideration he writes his definition, going solely by the rule that the definition must be based only upon what the sentences reveal as to the usage made of it. He must not allow himself to be influenced by what he thinks a given word ought to mean.

In defining new words, especially words that come to us from other languages, the editors of dictionaries often find that their definitions are challenged. In reply or defense their only appeal can be to the way in which the word is generally used. They cannot, of course, point to the dictionary. All they can do is show that the meaning they have given is in harmony with the general use being made of the word by the best speakers and writers.

Since the meaning of a word is determined by the use made of it, there is indeed a great wealth of truth to be found in a word that occurs in 412 sentences in the Old Testament, as does the word *mishpat*. The Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance gives a full list of these occurrences on page 776. It would be a formidable task to examine each one of these, and it is not necessary in this article to do so. The meaning of this word can be established by its first ten occurrences, and once this is done, when we come upon the word *judgment*, we can check to see if it is *mishpat*, and if so we can read this definition into it.

I do not believe that anyone who makes an honest study of the first ten occurrences of this word will ever again be guilty of perverting it to make it mean punishment. Here is the list. The italicized words represent the Hebrew word *mishpat* in each occurrence.

- Gen. 18:19 - to do justice and *judgment*.**
- Gen. 18:25 - the Judge of all the earth do *right***
- Gen. 40:13 - after the former *manner***
- Exo. 15: 25 - a statute and an *ordinance***
- Exo. 21:1 - these are *the judgments***
- Exo. 21:9 - after *the manner* of daughters**
- Exo. 21 :31 - according to this *judgment***
- Exo. 23:6 - shalt not wrest *the judgment* of**
- Exo. 24:3 - all *the judgments***
- Exo. 26:30 - according to *the fashion* thereof**

These ten passages are enough to show us what the word *mishpat* does not mean, and to give us an inkling of what it does. It has to do with an established order, system, or arrangement, and when it refers to God's judgments it has to do with an established order or arrangement that has its source in Him. This is quite clear in those passages where *mishpat* is translated *order*, Jud. 13:12, I Chron. 6:32, 15:13, 23:31, II Chron. 8:14, or in the thirty-nine places where it is translated *manner*. Any single aspect of God's order may be designated by the word *mishpat*, so our definition must not be too narrow or limited.

In the State of California there is a body of laws, directives, regulations, and interpretations which might well be called the judgments of the people of the State regarding the operation of motor vehicles within its boundaries. Each detail can be called a judgment, as when one comes upon a stop sign on the highway, it is the judgment of a traffic engineer that such a sign is needed there for the safety of those who travel. The driver of an automobile will find an abundance of signs, lines, warnings, instructions, etc. posted along the highway which inform him of these judgments. All who drive are expected to study a digest of these judgments. Ignorance of them can be no excuse if they are violated.

To state the obvious, it can be said therefore that there are judgments in this State which set the proper order, and which regulate the operation of motor vehicles. The one who knows these laws knows the judgments; the one who keeps them keeps the judgments; and the one who violates them can be charged with failing to observe the due order or judgments of this state. However, these judgments cover only one aspect of life in California. Other judgments cover other aspects of life, all of which make up the judgments of the State of California. All who live in this State or who enter it as visitors must live, move, and act in harmony with these judgments.

There are many who would like to have us believe that God's judgments are in the earth today, and that these judgments regulate, control, and set the order for all life upon it. If this were true it would be God's responsibility to make His judgments unmistakably clear and known to all men. He would need to make the facts known concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment, and He would need to enforce His judgments and punish those who violate them. If He were doing this we would have the kingdom (government) of God upon the earth. His judgments would be in all the earth.

That which in the New Testament is called the kingdom of God is often spoken of in the Old Testament as being the judgments of God. Some of the most glorious promises in the Word of God are those that promise God's judgments for this earth.

Consider these passages in which the writers speak prophetically of a glorious day to come. .'

He is the Lord our God: his judgments are in all the earth. Psalm 105:7.

Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteous ness at all times. Psalm 106:3.

I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. Psalm 119:7.

But the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness. Isa. 5:16.

Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. Isaiah 9:7.

Yea in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Isaiah :8, 9.

Behold a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. Isa. 32:1. ,

He shall bring forth judgment to the nations. Isa. 42:1.

He shall not fail nor be discouraged,. till He have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His law. Isa. 42:4.

The last passage quoted. above is one that is repeated in the New Testament with certain variations. The passage is Matthew 12:18-21, a passage which has been seriously neglected by most expositors. The results that are declared in it are threefold:

1. He will shew (announce) judgment to the nations.
2. He will send forth judgment unto victory.
3. In His name shall the nations trust.

The idea of nations trusting in Christ is one that is hard to believe. Some are able to believe that this can be true only if all or most nations are wiped out and new, God-fearing nations are created to take their place. But this cannot be, for in accomplishing this great purpose "a bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench" (Matt. 12:20), at least not until He has sent forth judgment and gained such victory that nations put their trust in Him. In that day all mankind can "sing unto the Lord a new song; for He hath done marvelous things: His right hand, and His holy arm, hath gotten Him the victory" (Psalm 98:1). Then it can be said among the nations that the Lord reigns. Then the world shall be established that it shall not be moved. Then He shall judge the peoples (plural) righteously (See Psalm 96:10).

This picture of the nations trusting in Christ is set forth in another place in the New Testament. In Romans 15:12 Paul gives us an inspired paraphrase of Isaiah's prophecy saying, "There shall be a root out of Jesse, and He that shall rise to reign over the nations, in Him shall the nations trust."

In the past few weeks I watched on television a meeting of the Security Council of the United Nations. Nations in their representatives had come together to debate controversial and highly inflammable matters. As men hurled their invectives at one another, many thoughts came to mind.

In view of this meeting of nations could we put Psalm 67:4 into the present tense and say, "let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for thou art judging the peoples righteously, and governing the nations upon the earth." No, we cannot do this, for it is all too evident that God is not now judging the peoples, nor is He governing the nations upon the earth. God is still permitting all nations to walk in their own ways (Acts 14:16), and there are indications that destruction and misery will result from their present ways, since they know not the way of peace (Rom. 3:16,17).

The great promise of God announcing judgment to the nations is one that staggers my imagination, but does not stagger my faith. He will send forth judgment from Himself. To me this means that He will send forth wave upon wave of light, truth, and knowledge until the victory is His. Then the nations will trust in His name.

As we look upon the earth today we see all nations in turmoil. I will not try to present the picture of troubled nations and peoples, as it will change before this is off the press. However, if history is any guide it will change for the worse. Many nations are rumbling volcanoes which may erupt at any time. Think what it would be like if God should now speak from heaven. Then we could say:

Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still. Psalm 76 :8.

The promises of judgment to come are some of the most precious to be found in the Bible. Let us not be guilty of twisting these into threats of destruction.

The End.

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THE INTERPRETATION OF EPHESIANS

In the *King James Version* the epistle which is commonly called "Ephesians" is addressed "to the saints which are at Ephesus." In view of this, one would take it that Paul could not have been more definite concerning the location of the saints for whom this letter was intended. Nevertheless, for centuries a controversy has gone on as to whether the words "at Ephesus" have sufficient textual authority to be given a place.

The average reader may be inclined to feel that this is a matter of little importance. There are those who insist that it makes very little difference to whom it was sent, that the important thing is to find what it says and what is meant by what is said.

A statement like this appeals to many, since it seems to be an honest sweeping away of all externals in order to get at the heart of the message. And it would be good to do this if it were not for the fact that the meaning of many things in this letter can only be determined when we know whether this letter was intended for "the saints which are at Ephesus." If it were intended for them it will mean one thing, if not for them it may mean something quite different.

As a patent example of this we find Paul saying to the recipients of this letter in 1:15 "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus." Now if words mean anything at all, these words tell us that his knowledge of the faith of these saints came to him from the report of another, that is, by hearsay. Now, how can this be said of the believers in Christ in Ephesus? Paul worked in this city longer than in any other place. He spent three years in Ephesus and during his residence his interest in the Ephesian saints was so great that he describes himself as "ceasing not to warn everyone day and night with tears" (Acts 20: 31). If this epistle were addressed to those whom He knew so well in Ephesus, then some entirely different meaning than the obvious one will have to be found in chapter one, verse fifteen.

It will be well for the reader to note that in his whole lifetime, he has never heard or read a single, sensible statement that did not require interpretation. Many statements are so simple that they seem to need no interpretation, since their meaning is instantly clear to us, but the fact is we simply interpret these without any apparent effort on our part. For example, the simple and laconic statement which my wife often makes to me, "Dinner is ready", is immediately understood by me to mean that all preparations for the evening meal are now complete, the food is now on the table and I am expected to come and partake of it. This understanding is of course based upon previous learning by which I established the meaning of these words in my mind. However, these simple words might require interpretation to one whose knowledge of English is sparse, or even to one to whom "dinner" is the noon meal.

All Bible readers must agree that the statements made by Paul in the "Ephesian" epistle are not so simple that they can be immediately understood. Each statement requires interpretation, and in many places the interpretation or meaning of a statement will depend upon whether or not the words "at Ephesus" belong in the text.

There is a vast amount of written material available on this matter. I doubt if there is any disputed text which has been researched as carefully and reported as fully as this one. Most writers build upon the findings of others, and a few set forth additional findings of their own. All arguments have been examined pro and con by the leading expositors of this epistle. After weighing this material myself, I cannot do else but agree with the summary of Dr. S. F. Salmond that: "It amounts to this, that there is no evidence that the words *en Epheso* formed part of the Greek text for the first three centuries. It is not till we come to the latter half of the fourth century that we have any certain indication of the local designation being included in the inscription, and that indication is found in Basil's implied distinction between the *ancient* copies and others."

Of the three great uncial manuscripts these words are found only in the Alexandrinus. This manuscript was the basis of the Greek text of Stephens, the text upon which the *King James Version* is based. At the time the K.J.V. was prepared, the Sinaiticus manuscript had not been discovered and the Vaticanus manuscript was not then available to scholars. Even under the most liberal rules governing the retention of disputed words in the Greek text of the New Testament, the words *en Epheso* will not stand the test. In a summation of all the evidence the following facts stand out:

A.D. 64. About this time an epistle was written by Paul, the one now commonly called Ephesians. This, along with copies made of it, was widely circulated. Did it contain the words *en Epheso* when it came from Paul's hand?

A.D. 140-150. Marcion deals with this epistle in his writings, and it is evident that the word *en Epheso* were not in the copy he used.

A.D. 200. Tertullian writes on this epistle, and the words *en Epheso* were certainly not in his copy of the letter. It may have been that either or both Mardon and Tertullian may have had access to the original monograph.

A.D. 200-225. Manuscripts written at this time, now called the "Chester Beatty Manuscripts" provide ancient evidence for the absence of these words from the original text.

A.D. 225. Origen did not have these words in his copy of this epistle. His writings demonstrate this.

A.D. 350. The Vaticanus manuscript does not contain the words *en Epheso*, though these words have been laboriously written in by a later hand.

A.D. 375. The Sinaiticus manuscript does not have the words *en Epheso*, as it originally stood before later hands altered the text.

A.D. 390. Jerome did not have the words *en Epheso* in his copy of the epistle.

A.D. 400. Basil quotes Eph. 1:1 in his writings and omits the words *en Epheso*.

A.D. 450. The Alexandrinus Manuscript, written about this time, **contains the words *en Epheso***. This is the first concrete evidence in favor of these words. From this date onward most manuscripts contain these words.

All this causes two important questions to arise. (1) If the words *en Epheso* were in the original text, how does it come that they were omitted from - the earliest copies made of this epistle, and (2) if they were not in the original, how does it come that in later copies they were inserted?

If they were in the original and then left out there is no possible explanation for such an act. That they would be dropped either by accident or design is an idea impossible to entertain. Their insertion is much easier to understand. After careful study I am convinced that the words *en Epheso* began to be inserted after men had lost all understanding and appreciation of an individual being *in Christ Jesus*. They made "in the church" a substitute for being in Christ. Believing this they found great difficulty in the Greek words *rrtois hagiois tois ousin kai pistois en Christo Iesou.*" This would read literally "to the saints, the ones being and believing in Christ Jesus." The idea of an individual "being in Christ Jesus" was a lost truth to them so they inserted *e n E p h e s o* after *tois ousin*. This made it read "the ones being in Ephesus."

The great truth of an individual being in Christ was a lost truth in 400 A.D., and to many it is still a lost truth today. A recent writer insists:

It is clear that from the very first, Christian faith *was* community rather than just faith of scattered individuals. For example, in almost every place that the phrase "in Christ" occurs in Paul's letters, it means. "in the Christian community." It does not stand for a private kind of mysticism. To be "in Christ" is to be "in the Church." The term "individual Christianity" cancels itself out. Robert McAfee Brown, *The Significance of the Church*, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia 1956, page 17.

Churchmen have never been able to understand the idea of Christian individualism, therefore if some words like "in Ephesus" are not inserted into the text here this will be a letter directed to men in Christ everywhere without any limitation as to locality or nationality.

An enlightening fact that has a bearing upon all this is set forth by Dean Stanley in his *Lectures on the History of the Eastern Church*. In discussing the transition from the New Testament picture of isolated communities and isolated individuals to the post-apostolic picture of "an organized society incorporated with the political systems of the world" he makes the following statement:

The first period is that which contains the great question, almost the greatest which Ecclesiastical History has to answer, - How was the transition effected from the age of the Apostles to the age of the Fathers, to Christianity as we see it in the New Testament, to Christianity as we see it in the next century, and as, to a certain extent we have seen it ever since?

Today the average Christian does not know that there is a perfect blank in ecclesiastical history that covers a period of from 50 to 75 years after the destruction of Jerusalem. This ignorance makes it possible for him to think that the institutions called churches are the continuation of the life, faith, and truth that we read of in the Acts and the Epistles. This is far from the truth. The ecclesia of the New Testament was a pure communion of believing individuals entirely without any institutional or organized character. It was in this "blank" period of ecclesiastical history that almost every precious truth of the Christian revelation was lost. By the time we can once again take up the history of men who profess to be Christians, it is evident in all writings that the great truth of a man being in Christ is gone and the importance of being in an institution called the church was substituted for it. In the writings of the so-called church fathers, it is an institution that is exalted, not Christ. Ecclesiastical supremacy became the theme, an authority established to govern the faithful, with power to control their acts and beliefs.

Thus it was that without the great truth of an individual being in Christ, Paul's opening words in the so-called Ephesian epistle seemed to lack something vital and necessary to expressing a complete thought. He wrote "to the saints, the ones being and believing in Christ Jesus." This made no sense to men who apparently knew nothing about an individual being in Christ, so the words "in Ephesus" were added in the hope of remedying this.

Origen (about 225 A.D.) struggled with this passage and came up with the idea that *tois ousin* (translated "which are" in K.J.V.) has a transcendental sense meaning "that the saints ARE, even as God is called I AM, and expressing the idea that they are those who are called out of non-existence into real existence or an existence worthy of the name." Such struggles are pitiful, more so because they were caused by Origen's ignorance of the great truth of a man being "in Christ."

Even though we cannot admit the validity of the words *en Epheso*, we will continue to call this epistle "Ephesians." No better name can be found for it. It is a mistake we are forced to accept and live with - somewhat like calling the original inhabitants of North America "Indians." However a more correct and fitting title would probably be, "The General Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Saints."

The word *pasin* (all) is found in some texts after the word *hagios* (saints). After careful consideration I am convinced it belongs there. The argument against it is linked up with the idea that this epistle was sent to the saints at Ephesus and the inclusion of the word "all" would take in Jews that believe as well as Gentiles. This is thought to be impossible since it is erroneously held that Eph. 2: 11 represents all addressed in this letter to be Gentiles. This position fails to recognize the changes in direction inherent in this epistle.

This is somewhat like a message I read which was given by the President of United Automobile Workers to the members of that Union. He started out addressing all without distinction but soon changed the direction of his message to "you who work for General Motors" or "those who work for Ford." These changes in direction come often in the Ephesian epistle. They are not noted by most expositors, who take it for granted that the whole epistle was written to some "church organization" in Ephesus.

When all facts are considered a literal translation of the Greek text of Ephesians 1:1 would read:

Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus, through the will of God, to all the saints, the ones being and believing in Christ Jesus.

An expanded paraphrase would read:

Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus, through the will of God, to all the saints, the ones who are in Christ Jesus, even believing ones in Christ Jesus. .

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JOHN'S GOSPEL

The one who reads the Gospel of John will, as he nears its close, come upon an explicit declaration as to the purpose and object that the author had in mind in writing this message. This declaration is to be accepted and believed just as much as any other part. As a prerequisite to discussing or teaching the Gospel of John a man should give assurance that he accepts this declaration and will be guided by it.

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name. John 20:30, 31.

Those who believe that God is the actual author of this book, that John wrote as he was moved by the Spirit of God, find in this declaration of purpose the object and goal which God had in view when He commissioned John to write. There was no intention of! composing a full biography of the Lord Jesus, and it is a mistake to look for it in this message. It was the purpose of the Spirit of God to select from the life of the Lord Jesus certain works that He did and certain words that He said, cause these to be recorded by John with the end in view that this written record will be used by the Spirit of God to produce in men belief or faith that the man named Jesus is in reality the Christ, the Son of God.

Faith in the Word of God requires us to believe that the things recorded here are the means which the Spirit of God will effectively *use* to produce - a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Men have seen fit to criticize this selection of material, charging that it is both inadequate and insufficient to produce a believer. Others hold that the material in John will produce only a low-grade or second-class believer in Christ. However, the divine declaration stands, and this tells us that these things "have been written and are on record in order that you may be believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," as Wuest amplifies this passage.

A statement such as this is not found in connection with any other book of the Bible. This book among the entire sixty-six stands alone in this matter. However, this in no way disparages any other book, for it stands written that:

All scripture is inspired by God, and is profitable for teaching, for convincing, for correcting, for disciplining in righteousness, to make the man of God equipped and ready for every good work. 2 Tim. 3:16 (Res. Ver.)

John's Gospel stands paramount in regard to the purpose for which it was written. We cannot in the least be honestly charged with down-grading other books just because we give this book the place that God has given it. It is an act of faith upon our part, an act of taking God at His word and thinking accordingly when we recognize and believe that the material in John was recorded so that men might be believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

In the lifetime of an individual there is no one thing that he can do which is as great in the sight of God as to have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. To say of a man that he is an active believer in Jesus Christ is the greatest thing that can be said of him. It is my personal conviction that in my own lifetime the one fact that gives me standing in the sight of God is the fact that I am a believer in Jesus Christ. I claim to be a theogenic, that is, a God-produced believer in His Son. Over forty years ago

God moved in relationship to my life to make Himself a part of it. I did not resist His gracious effort, and the result is that I am now related to God through Jesus Christ. It is through Him that I am now believing in God (I Peter 1:21). The relationship which I have with God is the result of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, looking back, I know that I could have avoided many tortuous roads if from the very first I had concentrated on the revelation concerning Jesus Christ which is epitomized in John's Gospel.

It is also my conviction that my basic task and my supreme task in my service for the Lord is the presentation of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. This demands that I shall ever be telling who He is and what He is in God's sight. In doing this, my goal and my hope is that I shall see as a result, men and women, boys and girls who are believing in the Lord Jesus with an ever growing appreciation of Him. From long experience and observation I have found that I can best present the Lord Jesus Christ and declare the record God has given of His Son by using the material found in John's Gospel. In doing this I am convinced that I am working in harmony with the label or directions that God appended to this book when He declared: "But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."

A claim is being made today that the result of proclaiming John's message will be to produce those who "believe in John's message of eternal life" or "believers who have accepted the who soever gospel of John". These "believers in John's gospel" are supposed to be second-class believers, and they are not included in a very select group which is being designated by the term "the church which is His body." I have come upon those who are enjoying the delightful sense of belonging to this exclusive group, it being held to be one that is superior to all other groups, being composed of those who have been "initiated" into and who are now enjoying the knowledge of certain esoteric mysteries which are not understood and cannot be understood by those on the outside. These claim to be "in the mystery" as a result of believing what they call "the gospel of the dispensation of the grace of God." In conversation with some of these I have discovered that this "belief" in "the gospel of the dispensation of the grace of God" consists of accepting certain declarations that have been made concerning the message of Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians - that all who agree are classed as "Bereans" and that anyone who questions these ideas is a heretic to be shunned.

Several years ago a woman came to one of my classes, and at the close engaged me in conversation along these lines. She was the mother of an eight year old boy. Like many children of this age he liked to have someone read to him, even being anxious for his mother to read aloud from the Bible. She did this almost every night but limited her reading to Old Testament stories and Ephesians. She was being instructed by a teacher who told her that if the boy "believed John's gospel" he would end up with nothing more than a place on earth, but if he believed the gospel *set* forth in Ephesians he would get a place seated with Christ "far above all heavens." When I attempted to show her the purpose for which John's Gospel was written, it became evident that she had no appreciation of the importance and value of believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. She attributed faith such as this to all "church members", and kept insisting that she expected a far higher position than would be given to them.

There are certain evident and positive facts that should guide our thinking in regard to these matters. The most important fact is that Paul's Ephesian letter is addressed "to the saints, the ones being and believing in Christ Jesus." It is not addressed to those who "believe the Ephesian gospel", nor to those who are aware "of the revelation of the Apostle Paul in his prison epistles." This is a fact so obvious that I apologize for pointing it out. All that is said in this epistle is said to those who believe in Christ Jesus. No man has any right to take these things and limit them to those who believe "Paul's revelation concerning the church revealed in his prison epistles."

Another fact to be noted is that if one reads the Gospel of John, and if by the Spirit of God he is enabled to have fulfilled in his life the purpose for which it was written, he will not end up "believing John's message", or "believing the whosoever gospel of John." He will end up as one who believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. God will put to his account this belief and he will stand before God as one who is a believer in this unbelieving world. This being true, then every promise of glory and privilege made in Ephesians becomes his personal property, since all the promises of glory, privilege, and exaltation found in Ephesians are made to believers in Christ Jesus.

In the thirty-three years of the Acts period many believed. These were theogenic believers, yet they were produced by means that God is not using today. All ministry was performed by men commissioned by God and authorized by God to speak in His behalf. No man took this honor to himself unless He were named by God. All belief in the Acts period was the outcome of something spoken rather than something written. Men spoke by inspiration, and if they repeated anything written in the Old Testament it was because they were directed by God to do so. The presentation of Jesus Christ was done by apostles who performed the mighty works which were "the signs of an apostle" (II Cor. 12:12). As Paul describes it (near the close of the Acts period):

For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Romans 15:18,19.

This was God's method of dealing in the Acts period when He worked with men with the end in view of producing belief that Jesus is the Christ the son of God. In the whole of the Acts period it can be said that all who believed became believers as the result of something heard and something seen, not by the proclamation of something written. And what they heard came from a man inspired to speak. Little wonder that Paul could say to the Thessalonians of himself, Silvanus, and Timothy in regard to their message:

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. I Thess. 2:13.

God's method of dealing with men today is not the same as in the Acts period. A great administrative change has taken place, and this change is marked for us by Paul's words in Acts 28:28. Any man who says that God's method of dealing with men in the Acts period was the same as it is today is blind to obvious facts and stamps himself as an unworthy expositor of God's Word.

At Acts 28: 28 the salvation of God was sent to the nations. This "salvation" is God's channel of blessing, even the Lord Jesus Christ. We often sing, "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow." This is true. But it should ever be kept in mind that the channel through whom these blessings flow is Christ Jesus. 'And it should also be remembered that at Acts 28:28 this channel was turned toward the nations, and even to this day the nations have not yet realized all the blessings which this channel will bring to them. Nevertheless, some blessings have been realized, and the first blessing that came to the nations through this channel is a book that is without discrimination of any kind, the book we now call John's Gospel. The nations have now been entrusted with a deposit of truth.

When John penned the last word of this book, something was written, and now stands written, that men might believe. From that time forth believers in the Lord Jesus Christ would no longer be produced by the personal ministry of apostles. Neither would they be produced by signs and wonders. They would be produced by something written, and that "something" is the divinely selected material recorded in the Gospel of John.

The importance of this must not be missed. If God provided a Savior for men, then men will have to be saved by that Savior or not at all. God's provision cannot be neglected or ignored. And if God caused a book to be written so that men might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, then men will have to become believers by the means God provided for this purpose.

It is therefore not at all surprising that we find' recorded only in this book a declaration made by Christ wherein He said:

Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. John 20:29.

This description fits perfectly those who are believing now. It does not fit any who believed before Acts 28:28. If sacred history is searched from one end to the other it will be found that all who believed before this time had some good concrete reason for putting their faith in God. In Old Testament times men believed because God spoke to them personally, or because He provided some evidence upon which they could rest their faith. The heavens were not silent and it was not expected that any man should believe without seeing. When Christ was among men, the record teems with miracles, and this continued throughout the period of which Acts is the history. From the ascension of Christ onward it was said: "And they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following," (Mark 16:20). Or as the writer of Hebrews says of this great salvation: "which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him: God also' bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will" (Heb. 2:3, 4).

Under conditions such as these it was impossible for anyone to qualify as "not having seen yet believed." God was then producing believers by what men heard and saw. He used men and miracles, and in the one case where he did not use men, the miraculous was more evident than ever before. I refer to Paul in Acts 9.

However, all this has been changed. Today if any man qualifies before God as a believer he has become such by the means of something which God has written and it must be on the basis of having not seen, yet believed. From the time that something was written so that men might believe, men have been shut up to this God-given means that will produce a believer. This fact establishes the relationship of John's Gospel to the dispensation of the grace of God.

The Gospel of John is a message which anyone can take to himself and which anyone can take to others. In this dispensation we need no apostle to speak personally to us. Neither do we need a personal commission to present God's written message to others. We take Paul's instruction to Timothy in II Tim. 4:2 to be God's directive to us. "Preach the word, keep at it in season and out of season." If our goal in proclaiming the Word is to see men generated by God into a personal belief in Jesus as being the Christ, the Son of God, then let us be diligent in proclaiming that material which was divinely selected with this end in view.

The End.

THE WORD "HEAVEN"

It is good to know that many are interested in learning more about the word "heaven" and that some are making definite study of it. In this brief study I will set forth some of my own findings in the hope of being of help.

Let us begin with an illustration. The word *motor* is one that can be applied to anything that imparts motion, to any source of mechanical power. This meaning is inherent in the word *motor*. A squirrel inside a wheel causing it to spin could properly be called the motor of a squirrel cage. If in the future someone comes up with an invention which is a new means of imparting motion or some new source of mechanical power, he will not need to search far and wide for a word to describe it. There is a word close at hand which fits all such things—the word *motor*.

In the Hebrew word *shamayim*, the Greek word *ouranos*, and the English word *heaven* we have three words that are as much alike as four quarters, two halves, or one dollar in American currency. And even though these words may be used in different applications, their value is the same. Four quarters could be used in a vending machine where a dollar could not, but this does not alter the values. In order to understand these three words the basic value or meaning must be discovered.

If one reads the first eight verses of Genesis he will find that the word *shamayim* (heaven) is used of two different things in this portion. It is used first of that which God created in the beginning and of that which He made on the second day. In view of these facts it has to be acknowledged that there is some basic meaning in this word so that it can be used of these two different things, and the things of which it is used must have certain definite characteristics or else this word will not represent them.

In considering all the uses made of this word in the Old Testament, and also all the uses made of *ouranos* in sacred and profane Greek writings, along with our own use of the word *heaven*, the conviction is inescapable that the inherent idea in all these words is *height*, in the sense of being *over and above*. These words therefore can be applied to any being, person, place, or thing that is *over and above*. In other words if it is elevated, if it is over and above, the Holy Spirit may see fit to use the word *shamayim* or *ouranos* to designate it. We who speak English may use the word *heaven* to designate such things. This is not necessarily so, I am only stating the possibility.

In the first occurrence of *shamayim* in Genesis 1: 1 it is not possible for anyone to say with certainty exactly what was created, but since the word is plural and we know its basic meaning we can say in general terms that it was things which are over and above the earth. In the nineteenth Psalm we learn that in the heavens God has set a tabernacle for the sun, giving us good reason to think that "the heavens" of Genesis 1: 1 refers to the planets of our solar system with one planet the earth being singled out for special attention. In relationship to the earth the planets are always over and above us and could therefore be properly called *shamayim*. Could it be that when God speaks of "planting the heavens" that He refers to a time when the planets shall, be inhabited (Isa. 51:16)? I do not believe that they are fit for any life as we know it today, but I do not think they will forever be in their present condition.

In the second occurrence of *shamayim* (Gen. 1:8) we know that God made the firmament or expanse (what we now call the sky) and that this expanse being over and above the earth is properly called *heaven*.

A reading of the entire portion that includes Daniel 4:17, 25, 26, and 32 will demonstrate that the words "the Most High" and "the heavens" are used interchangeably in reference to the same Being.

Both of these terms are descriptive titles of God. The word *shamayim* is certainly a proper designation for our God, He being the One who is over and above all. That the word *heavens* in the Old Testament can and does mean God in certain occurrences is acknowledged by all who have considered the matter.

At this point it may be well to note that it is utterly foolish to think that a word can mean only one thing. It is a mistake to think that if a word has one meaning it can have no other. In fact there is scarcely a leading word in any language that can be held to a single meaning. The English word *give* has more than twenty meanings. A man would certainly make himself ridiculous if he argues that *give* cannot mean "to bestow without receiving a return," since it cannot mean this in the sentence "I will give you ten dollars for a day's work"

In view of this, how foolish it is for anyone to say that *shamaJim* cannot mean God in Daniel 4:26 since it cannot possibly mean God in Genesis 1:1. Yet this was the fallacy of reasoning that was used against me when I set forth that the word *ouranos* in the plural meant *the celestials* (that is, heavenly beings) in certain occurrences. It was argued that it could not mean this since this meaning will not fit into II Peter 3:5 which speaks of "the heavens being on fire."

The Greek word *ouranos* follows the same pattern as the Hebrew word. It is derived from the verb *ora* which means *to raise*, and *ana* which means *above* or *up*. In it we have the idea of *raised up* with the meaning of *over and above* being basic in it. This is seen in its usage in Classical as well as New Testament Greek

In the New Testament, *ouranos* is used as a designation for God in Luke 15:18. This is to be expected since God is the One who is over and above all. This, I believe, is also its meaning in Luke 10:18 and in John 3:13.

In the plural it is used of celestial beings, as in Ephesians 4:10 which reads in the Greek "ascends up over all the heavens." If this refers to places, it would put Christ out of these places altogether. Since men at present are a little lower than the angels, it is quite proper that angels be referred to as "the heavens." Christ is ascended up over all of those who are over and above men.

The word *ouranos* is used of the place to which the Lord Jesus ascended and where He is now located. Mark 16:19.

It is used of supreme monarchs such as the Caesars, who were over and above all men. Note this in Acts 2:5 and Col. 1:23. These passages leave us with impossible problems unless this is recognized. It is to be expected that this will be denied by some who have no solution for any problem but who have a problem for every solution. This use also should be noted in Jeremiah 14:22 where the parallelism would indicate that "the heavens" spoken of here are the rulers of the nations.

From sources outside the New Testament we find that *ouraniskos* (diminutive of *ouranos* - meaning a little heaven) is used of the vaulted ceiling of a room, the top of: a tent, and a canopy. *Ouraniones* is used of the heavenly ones, that is, the celestials. An interesting use of *ouranos* is seen in the fact that it is used of the hard palate, what we call the roof of the mouth. This is to be expected since the hard palate is over and above the mouth. This same usage is found also in the Dutch language, which is not strange since the basic idea of something over and above persists in all these closely related terms.

In the English language the word heaven has been restricted by usage so that it now does not mean much more than the special place where the good are supposed to go at death. However, this has not always been so and the wider meaning is still seen in such phrases as "Heaven help us" and "Heaven

only knows." A reference to the dictionary will demonstrate that one meaning of *heaven* is "the sovereign of heaven; God; also, heavenly beings."

In the figurative use of the word *heaven* it often has reference to that which is exalted, and the idea of exaltation is inherent in *shamayim*, *ouranos*, and *heaven*. We should ever keep in mind the words of Solomon: "The heavens for height, and the earth for depth." Provo 25:3.

In English the *noun* *heaven* can be turned into an adjective by the addition of - *ly*. This gives us *heavenly*. This is also done in Greek, where *ouranos* becomes *ouranios*. This adjective is then intensified by adding a prefix which gives us *epouranios*. Like all adjectives this word will get its nuance or shade of meaning from the word or words which it qualifies, even as in the phrases "dark day" and "dark night" we get different ideas from the word *dark*. After years of consideration I am now convinced that the idea of *exaltation* is the one the Spirit of God intended in this adjective, and the intensified character of it can be best expressed by the words "most exalted." The details of this are yet to be worked out, but I am now convinced that the Lord said to Nicodemus in John 3:12:

If I have told you the most basic things and you are not believing, how shall you be believing if I should be telling you the most exalted things.

This is not offered as a literal translation. It is an interpretation. It is offered as a clue to be followed out in our search for more truth in regard to *epouranios*.

The End.

THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS

Since sending out the last issue I have again made the long trip across the United States, giving fifty-nine messages in fourteen places in a fifty day period. I was happy indeed with the response, the interest manifested, and the results. I arrived home just two days after the birth of our fourth grandson, Russell Otis Hancock on May 7, another fine boy in the series that now numbers four.

In response to many queries I am happy to report that I am enjoying excellent health at the moment, having completely recovered, with no lingering after-effects of my two operations eighteen months ago.

End, Vol. XVI, No. 1