

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA.55:10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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THE DIVINE INTERCHANGE PRINCIPLE

Those who interpret the Bible without being guided by clearly defined principles usually end up by making God's Word to mean what they want it to mean. It seems that many interpreters want it this way. They operate without any laws, principles, or rules of any kind. This allows them to force the Word to yield to them, and frees them from any obligation to conform to the Word. There are those who will adopt principles of interpretation up to a certain point, but when they get into a bind and the Word does not say what they want it to say, they ignore the principle and interpret as they please. Honest principles of interpretation can be discovered and established by all who love the truth.

Many years ago I came upon the principle which I now call the principle of divine interchange. It was not new; many had seen it before me, but I found it for myself, gave it a name, and put it into use. It is a principle that is quite simple and easily stated: Hebrew and Greek words that are used interchangeably by the Holy Spirit are identical in value and meaning. The Hebrew word as used in the Old Testament is the primary word and the Greek word used in its place in New Testament quotations means exactly the same, no matter what nuances of meaning it may have had among the Greeks. The Greek word must conform to the Hebrew, and not the other way around.

A clear example of this principle can be seen in the Hebrew word *sheol* and the Greek word *hades*. In Psalm 16:10 the inspired writer declares: "For Thou wilt not leave my soul in *sheol*," and in Acts 2:27 the Spirit of God says through Peter: "Because Thou wilt not leave my soul in *hades*." Now if *sheol* and *hades* are not equivalent in meaning and value, then David did not say what he is said to have said in Acts 2:27.

Sheol is a word of divine origin, and its true meaning can be gathered only from its divine usage in the Old Testament. When we know how it is used there, we know all that can be known as to its meaning based upon usage. If the meaning of a word cannot be obtained from sixty-five sentences in which it is found, then there is no way of obtaining its meaning, and it may as well be excised from all languages as a nonsense word.

The Greek word *hades* is a word of human origin and it comes to us surrounded by all kinds of human traditions that had their origins in human imagination. The basic meaning of *hades* from Homer (100 B.C.?) on down was "the state of the dead." However, the Greeks with their Platonic ideas of the soul and immortality began to build ideas into this word about the state of souls, bliss, punishment, etc. All this foolishness may have clouded its true and basic meaning, but it could not wipe it out. Its basic meaning was entirely congruent with the basic meaning of *sheol* so it was the word selected by the Holy Spirit to express what David had said. Being cognizant of the Greek usage of the word *hades*, and ignoring all its accretions that it gathered in the centuries between Homer and Christ, we find it to be a perfect representation of *sheol*. Thus by the principle of divine interchange *sheol* and *hades* mean the same, they have the same value. (See Issue No. **SB082**).

An example here may be helpful: The plays of Shakespeare were written in the English language. Therefore a Frenchman who wanted to quote in his own language the familiar line: "The quality of mercy is not strain'd, it droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven," would have to find some harmonious French words for "quality," "mercy," and "strained." If he used words that did not express the meaning of these words, he would misrepresent Shakespeare.

We can properly say that the moment came when the Holy Spirit needed to select a word from the Greek that would say the same thing as *sheol*. Since He began with "David speaketh," He chose the word that would not misrepresent what David originally said.

In view of these facts the proper way to make a study of *sheol* would be to begin with this word in the Old Testament, examining every passage, then carrying on through every occurrence of *hades*, treating these as if they were the same word. However, this is not the way it is usually done. Most men want to start with the English word *hell*, attach to it all the wild meanings that men have devised and imagined, read all of this into the words *sheol* and *hades*, wherever it is convenient, then insist that this unholy mess of ideas is the true meaning of these words. Their next step is to brand all as heretics who do not agree with their interpretations. As for me, let it be known that I believe, accept, and teach every grain of truth the Bible declares concerning *sheol* and *hades*, but I believe next to nothing of what men teach and say concerning *hell*.

A most valuable insight into truth is provided by the recognition of this principle when it is applied to the Hebrew word *qahal* and the Greek word *ekklesia*. These two words are used interchangeably by the Holy Spirit, and true understanding of the word *ekklesia* must come out of an understanding of the word *qahal*. It cannot be said for certain, but there are reverent scholars who insist that Jesus Christ, a Hebrew, speaking to twelve men who were also Hebrews, said to them, "**Upon this rock I will build my *qahal*.**" I am inclined to agree with this.

In Psalm 22:22 we find: "**I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the congregation (*qahal*) will I praise Thee.**" Then in Hebrews 2: 12, the same truth is repeated by inspiration: "**I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren, in the midst of the church (*ekklesia*) will I sing praise unto Thee.**" Thus we can say for certain that *ekklesia* was the word chosen by the Spirit of God to express the very same idea that is found in the word *qahal*. And we can further say that since *ekklesia*, a word of human origin, is used in the New Testament as the equivalent of the Hebrew word *qahal*, a word of divine origin, the meaning of *ekklesia* should be obtained, not from human philosophies and imaginations, but from the divine usage of *qahal* in the Old Testament.

There are those who will accept the law of divine interchange in regard to some words such as *sheol* and *hades*, but refuse to even consider that *ekklesia* was the word chosen by the Holy Spirit to express the truth of the word *qahal*. However, if a principle is true, it is true at all times; if it applies in one place, it should apply in another, all circumstances being equal. Thus, he who would know what *ekklesia* means should make an examination of its Hebrew counterpart and find what it means.

A complete examination of the word *qahal* is a major task. I know this quite well as I have written notes on each of the 123 occurrences of the noun and the thirty-nine occurrences of the verb. This has brought the conviction that the words *qahal* and *ekklesia* are completely harmonious, even as the law of divine interchange indicates they must be.

In understanding the word *qahal* we need to recognize that if one nation is given by God a mediatorial position in regard to all other nations, then that nation becomes a *qahal* or *ekklesia*. When Isaac sent Jacob to Padan-aram to seek a wife, his parting words were: "**And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be an *ekklesia* (*qahal*) of peoples**" (Gen. 28:3). This is the first occurrence of *qahal* in the Old Testament.

In the second occurrence (Gen. 35:11) God declared that a nation, even an *ekklesia* (*qahal*) of nations would come out of Jacob. In Gen. 48:4, Jacob declared to Joseph that God had promised to make him (Jacob) an *ekklesia* (*qahal*) of peoples (note the

plural). All of this is in harmony with what we know of Israel's future place as a channel of blessing to the peoples of the earth. See Gen. 12:2,3.

In Gen. 49:6 *qahal* is translated "assembly." This had to do with the tribal council of Simeon and Levi. They were heads of their tribes and they had appointed men to regulate all tribal matters. However, Jacob was superior to them as he was head of all twelve tribes. This council or ekklesia represented Simeon and Levi, but Jacob avowed that it did not represent him. He asked that his honor be not linked up with this *qahal*, meaning that he was no part of their cruel actions.

In Numbers 10:7 the noun and the verb are found in the same sentence. The noun is translated "congregation" and the verb is translated "gathered together." This is the same as we might say of the California legislative body: "When the assembly is to assemble, " or on a national scale, "When the congress is to congress." It must ever be remembered that an assembly is composed of assemblymen, and a congress is made up of congressmen, men who have these positions out of the people of their districts.

The things set forth in regard to *qahal* are only clues. The diligent student will find a complete list of all occurrences, verb and noun, on pages 1094 and 1095 of *Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance*.

Following out the principle of divine interchange will deepen one's conviction that the Bible is indeed the verbally inspired Word of God. This was my own experience as I traced through both Testaments the word *nephesh* and *psuche*, the words for "soul." That these are interchangeable is demonstrated by comparing Psalm 16:10 and Acts 2:27, also Gen. 2:7 and 1 Cor. 15:45. *Nephesh* occurs 754 times and *psuche* 105 times. A consideration of every occurrence will show that *soul* is a term applied by the Spirit of God to all beings that have sensory capacity. This is the primary and foundational meaning of both the Hebrew and Greek words. Fuller meanings must be determined from the context, as these words are used figuratively in many passages. Its primary meaning can be seen in its first occurrences (Gen. 1:20, 21, 24, 30) where it is applied to animal life. Then it is applied to man in Gen. 2:7 when the breath of life gave him all sensory capacities and he became a living soul. But it is never used in any way in any occurrence that violates its primary meaning.

This is one of the glories of the Word of God and positive proof of its divine authorship. Here is a collection of sixty-six books written by over forty different writers-kings, peasants, plowmen, philosophers, fishermen, physicians, scholars, unlearned men, statesmen, and poets-living in various countries over a period of sixteen hundred years, and yet this one word is used consistently and accurately with the same fundamental meaning all the way from Gen. 1:20 to Rev. 20:4. And this even in spite of the abrupt change from an oriental language to an occidental.

This could not be possible unless the Bible had but one supervising author-the Spirit of God.

End Issue No. SB125