



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume XVII
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Translation Corrections

by — Arthur P. Adams (1845-1925)

There are many passages scattered throughout the Bible that, for one cause and another, are misunderstood. Some are mistranslated, others are invariably misquoted, others again are wrongly punctuated; and so from various causes the truth is obscured. I have thought that it would be profitable to notice some of these defects and correct them if possible.



It is commonly understood that the word “hell” here means the place of future punishment; but this view cannot be true, for the original word is *shē’ōl*, equivalent to *hades* in the New Testament, and means the grave. It is the same place that Christ went when He died:

For thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption (Psalm 16:10).

PSALM 7:11

God judgeth the righteous and God is angry with the wicked every day.

So it reads in the *King James Version*, but so it ought not to read. The correct reading is just the opposite, viz., “*God is a righteous judge and He is not angry at all times.*” So, Young renders it. The original word for “God” is very similar to the word for “not.” “El” means God; “al” means not; in the original there is not so much difference as in the English, as the vowels are very nearly alike. Doubtless these two words became confused and thus the error occurred; the corrected rendering agrees perfectly with such passages as:

The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep His anger for ever (Psalm 103:8-9).

For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made (Isaiah 57:16).

Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:18-19).

PSALM 9:17

The wicked shall be turned into hell and all the nations that forget God.

Because thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. ... He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption (Acts 2:27, 31).

With this view of the word hell what is the force of the passage, “*The wicked shall be turned into the grave*”? What is the special point in making that declaration, since we know that all of the righteous, as well as the wicked, shall go down into the grave?

There is no special point to it; the translation is incorrect; the correct rendering is as follows:

*The wicked shall **turn back**¹ to the grave, all the nations that forget God.*

It will be noticed that in the *King James Version* the word “and” is in italics, indicating that it is not in the original. I suppose that it is understood by my readers that words in italics

1. Editor: Here are some versions that have rendered this verse correctly:

*The wicked do **turn back** to Sheol, All nations forgetting God* (Young).

*The lawless shall **return** to hades, all nations forgetful of God* (Rotherham).

*The wicked will **return** to Sheol – all the nations that forget God* (Holman).

*Wicked people, all the nations who forget God, will **return** to the grave* (God’s Word).

*The wicked shall **return** to the unseen, all the nations, forgetful of Elohim* (CV).

(see *CORRECTIONS*, page 3719) ↗

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- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
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 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
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CORRECTIONS (continued from front page)

in this version are not in the original, but are supplied by the translators to make out, or help out, the sense. These have no authority excepting the opinion or judgment of the translator: we have a right to ignore them, or substitute other words in their place, if the context, other Scripture or common sense warrants it.

Usually these supplied words are judiciously inserted and help to make the sense clear; but not infrequently they obscure the truth, and in many cases, they pervert it. We should look out for these supplied words when we read the Bible, and take notice whether they are warranted or not.

If we leave out the word “and” in the passage we are examining, we have almost the reading that I have given above as the correct one. The sense of the passage is that wickedness will destroy any nation; and this fact is demonstrated in past history and in the present condition of the nations of the world. With the proper understanding of the word “hell,” the common rendering has no force or point whatever; but the correct rendering I have given is a great truth confirmed by all human experience.

PSALM 109

This Psalm has been severely criticized by infidels and other opposers of the Bible, because it represents David, “*a man after God’s own heart,*” as breathing out the most awful imprecations and curses on his enemies and all of their posterity.

The Psalm reads like the anathemas of the Romish inquisition, and the Christian finds it utterly irreconcilable with the spirit of Christ, of whom David was a type.

Now there is a very reasonable explanation of this Psalm which clears up all of this difficulty and shows us that David was never guilty of uttering these curses, but that, on the contrary, he is simply reporting to the Lord in prayer the curses that his enemies pronounce on him.

Now notice how naturally this explanation corresponds with the language of the Psalm. The first five verses are a prayer to the Lord setting forth how his enemies have been talking against him;

For the mouth of the wise and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue; they compassed me about also with words of hatred.

Notice here that David refers to himself by the first person, singular pronoun, “*me,*” and to his enemies by the third person, plural pronoun, “*they.*” Now with the sixth verse David begins to tell what his enemies are saying against him; that this is the true meaning is indicated by the pronouns.

“*Set thou a wicked man over him.*” For whom? Is David saying

this of his enemies? No, for if he was he would have said, “*Set thou a wicked man over them,*” *i.e.,* “over my enemies.” David is not pronouncing curses on his enemies, but is rehearsing the curses that his enemies pronounce on him; and this is the drift of the Psalm all of the way through until we get to the 20th verse.

Just supply the words “They say” before verse 6 and read the first 19 verses, and it is as plain as can be that the above explanation is correct.

Now leave out the supplied words from verse 20, and read it thus,

This [i.e., all of this cursing] is the work of mine adversaries before the Lord, and of them that speak evil against my soul.

The remainder of the Psalm is in perfect harmony with this explanation; see especially verses 25 and 28.

It was a great pleasure to me to find this explanation of this puzzling Scripture. How David could utter such imprecations and be a man after God’s Own heart would be hard to tell; but the above view is reasonable, in perfect harmony with the language of the psalm and clears up all of the difficulties.

ISAIAH 26:10-11

We will now notice a passage where a wrong punctuation obscures the truth.

If favor is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he deals perversely and does not see the majesty of the LORD. O LORD, Thy hand is lifted up, but they see it not. Let them see Thy zeal for Thy people, and be ashamed. Let the fire for Thy adversaries consume them.

Change the various clauses in this passage into questions implying an affirmative answer and the sense is very materially changed, and is much more in harmony with the context. The punctuation of the Bible is another thing that the translators have supplied; in the original there are no punctuation marks at all; hence the punctuation has no more authority than the supplied words, and we may change it if the sense requires it or other Scripture gives us warrant.

Now see the passage under consideration together with the two preceding verses; as it stands in the *King James Version* there seems to be a fault in the connection. In :8-9 the prophet is earnestly longing and waiting for the coming of the Lord in the way of His judgments, for when His judgments are in the earth the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness; thus does the prophet speak of a time of special favor and blessedness, when the whole world shall be enlightened and learn righteousness. Then he goes on, according to the *King James Version,*



Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness.

This seems a positive contradiction of the sentiment of the preceding verse: in that verse the prophet says that in that specially favored period, when the Lord comes in the way of His judgments, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness; in the next verse the *King James Version* makes him say that though favor is shown to the wicked yet will he not learn righteousness; and the rest of this verse and the next verse seems still further to carry out this contradiction.

Now all the of trouble is in the punctuation of :10-11. Change the declarative clauses in :10-11 to questions, implying the answer “Yes,” and all is harmony. Read it thus:

In the way of Thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for Thee; with my soul have I desired Thee, for when Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Let favor be showed to the wicked, will he not learn righteousness? In the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and not behold the majesty of the LORD? LORD, when Thy hand is lifted up will they not see? They shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at Thy people, yea the fire of Thine enemies shall devour them.

With the above punctuation the drift of the passage is very apparent.

The judgment day is a period of special blessing for the race, the time when God will show the exceeding riches of His grace (favor); then “*the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.*” After making this statement, the prophet goes on to show by questions how reasonable this view is.

Let favor be showed to the wicked, will he not learn righteousness? In the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and not behold the majesty of the LORD?

When the wicked is enlightened and brought to a knowledge of the truth, will he not then learn righteousness? Of course he will, for with the knowledge will come the power and the desire to do right. “*In the land of uprightness,*” that is, when all around him is fair, honorable and truthful, “*Will he deal unjustly?*” Certainly not, it would be hardly possible to be unjust amid such surroundings; and as for beholding the Lord’s majesty, we know that it is just the time when,

God’s glory shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it (Isaiah 40:5).

The prophet goes on, “*LORD, when Thy hand is lifted up,*” that is, when His power and authority are plainly manifested in the earth, so that all shall recognize it, “*will they not see? They shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at Thy people.*”

Compare Jude 14-15.

Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.

“*Yea, the fire of Thine enemies shall devour them*” – their enmity shall be destroyed when they see and experience these things

Compare Zephaniah 3:8-9.

“Therefore wait ye upon Me,” saith the LORD, “until the day that I rise up to the prey: for My determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them Mine indignation, even all My fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one consent.”

Thus explained the whole passage is plain and harmonious.

JOHN 3:16

Now we will look at a passage in the New Testament, viz., that precious declaration in John 3:16,

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son ...

We will take into consideration :14-17 inclusive. First I will clear up several points of obscurity and error and then give the rendering as it should be.

In :15 the words “*not perish but*” should be omitted; according to the best authorities they have been interpolated, probably from the following verse.

The word “*whosoever*” in :15-16 should be rendered “*all.*” In the original it is the word usually rendered “*all*” throughout the New Testament. It occurs hundreds of times, and it is rendered “*all*” in over nine hundred instances. The rendering “*all,*” then, is plainly the usual one.

The word rendered “*believeth*” in the original is a participle, “*believing;*” the clause should read, “*that all, believing in Him, should not ...*”

The words “*believing in Him*” are explanatory, telling us how “*all*” are to be saved, viz., by “*believing in Him.*”

In the *King James Version* it will be noticed that the participle is, without authority, rendered by the verb “*believeth,*” and the

words, “whosoever believeth in him” are thereby made to have a conditional force, as though it read, “if they believe in Him,” implying that some will not believe in Him, and hence will perish, and be lost eternally.

This is not a correct rendering of the original, as I have shown above. The clause is not conditional, but is thrown in, as a participial form, as explanatory of the manner of the world’s salvation, by believing in Him; this view is fully confirmed by :19,

For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Now I will give the whole passage as it ought to be.

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that all, believing in Him, might have æonial life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that all, believing in Him, might not perish, but have æonial life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Thus truthfully translated, this passage is one of the grandest and most sweeping declarations contained in the Bible of the final universal triumph of God’s grace in the salvation of the world. It is positive and direct, and mighty enough, could they only appreciate it, to utterly silence all of those narrow, shortsighted souls who think that God will gain only a partial victory over the devil, that he will not save the world, but only a portion of it, a vast number being eternally lost.

It is very plain why the translators of the *King James Version* handled this passage as they did: Their creed would not allow them to accept it just as it reads; it required only a slight change to make it conform to their own idea. They insert the unusual rendering “whosoever,” change believing to “believeth,” and then, punctuating it accordingly, the passage is “tinkered” with so as to harmonize with the creed. Thank God for deliverance from man-made creeds!

Let God be true, though every man be false (Romans 3:4).

HABAKKUK 2:2

Some passages of Scripture are habitually misquoted. For instance, Habakkuk 2:2, last clause, is almost always quoted, “*he that runs may read.*” The application is that God’s way of life is so plain and easy that a very slight attention, a passing glance, is sufficient to make it known to us. Now the passage is misquoted and utterly misapplied; it correctly reads,

The Lord answered and said, “Write the vision and make it plain on tables, that he may run that readeth it.”

The passage should not read, “*he that runs may read,*” but “*he that reads may run.*”

It is not easy to find and to walk in God’s way of life *now*, because,

Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Matthew 7:14).

Yet if God has opened our eyes to see the way – if He has made the “*vision*” plain to us in any part or degree, so that we can “*read*” it, then the knowledge thus obtained causes us to “*run with patience the race set before us*” (Hebrews 12:1; cf. Romans 2:7) that we may obtain “*the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 3:14).

The “*vision*” referred to here is in connection with the coming of the Lord, as is clearly manifested by comparing Habakkuk 2:1-4 with Hebrews 10:35-38.

ISAIAH 35:8

To strengthen the false application of the preceding text, Isaiah 35:8 is sometimes quoted, where we read that God’s way of life is “*an highway*” so plain that “*the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.*”

In this application a very important principle of Bible interpretation is violated. Paul expresses it when he says to Timothy,

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth (II Timothy 2:15).

This rule is of very great importance, though many entirely ignore it. Most Christians consider the Bible as all true *now*; they have no idea of different ages and dispensations, each of which have their own *special* truths that will apply to no other period.

When all Scripture is jumbled together regardless of God’s “*times and seasons,*” much of the force and true sense of Scripture is lost, and often times people are led thereby into grave and serious error.

Now take the passage under consideration (Isaiah 35:8): Where does it belong? To the present time? To some time in the past? Or, to the future?

Read the context in connection with the preceding chapter, and everyone will see (unless he has a very vivid and inventive imagination) that the language cannot apply to the present time or to any time in the past, and that it must apply to some future time period; and the last verse clearly indicates that that future time is when Christ’s kingdom is established on the earth.

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened ... then shall the lame man leap as a hart (:5-6).

It is *then* that “*an highway shall be there ...*” In the same way, Revelation 22:17 is often misquoted and misapplied, ►

“Whosoever will let him come,” as though the passage applied to the present time and condition.

Now, in the first place, there is no such passage in the Bible; it reads,

Whosoever will let him take the water of life freely.

In the second place, the context plainly shows that the passage belongs in “the New heavens and earth” (cf. 21:1, 6; 22:1). Now,

No man can come except the Father draw Him (John 6:44).

EZEKIEL 36:25

That class of Christians who are specially interested in the subject of holiness are very apt to violate this rule in their Bible references; they are so eager to find Scriptures to make out their favorite doctrine that they search the Bible through with great diligence and any passage that has in it the expression, holiness, sanctification, perfection, or any other kindred word, is seized as a proof text without the slightest regard to any indication in the context as to the proper time, place and persons of its application.

For instance Ezekiel 36:25 is often quoted in this way:

Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you; a new heart also will I give you.

This is a very favorite text to this class of Christians, and I have often heard it quoted to prove that the Christian should be clean, holy and perfect in this life. Yet it is grossly misapplied whenever it is thus quoted, and so plain is the true application from the context that anyone who misapplies it is thereby shown to be totally unable to “rightly divide the Word of Truth.”

The place where, the time when and the persons to whom this passage applies is clearly stated in the chapter. When God’s Israel are brought again to their own land, “**Then** [and there] will He sprinkle clean water upon them,” etc. It is “handling the Word of God deceitfully” (though it may be unintentional) to thus wrench a passage out of its plain connection and to apply it anywhere, to any time and to any person or persons according to the necessities of our creed or theory.

Rather let us “Study to show ourselves approved unto God [whether we are approved of men or not], workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.”

I CORINTHIANS 15:24-26

As a further illustration of this principle we will examine I Corinthians 15:24-26. Most Christians reading this passage would think that “the end” referred to is to be synchronous with the “coming” of Christ. They assume that Jesus comes,

and the end of all things earthly immediately follows. This passage is commonly understood this way; and in accordance with this interpretation the passage is used to prove that there is no redemption, mercy, work of grace or millennial reign after Christ comes; but His coming is simply to end all temporal things and to introduce an unchangeable eternity.

Here again the Word is not rightly divided. “Then cometh the end.” When? What is the time referred to by the adverb “then”? The correlative of “then” is “when,” and the apostle goes right on to tell “when” the end comes: Not at the coming of Christ, but,

When He shall have put down all rule and all authority.

Transpose the clauses and read :25-26 parenthetically, and the sense is plainly apparent:

Christ the first fruit, afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming, and when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall have put down all rule and authority and power (for He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet, the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death), then cometh the end.

This is to say, the end comes – the end of the great redemptive work – when, or after, Christ has reigned and “subdued all things unto Himself” (Philippians 3:21), and death, the last enemy, is destroyed. The Word “rightly divided” is harmonious throughout, but if this principle is disregarded, confusion and error must ensue.

HOSEA 4:9

Now we will notice another Scripture that is very frequently misquoted. Hosea 4:9 is usually quoted, “like priest, like people,” when the reading is just the other way about “like people, like priest.”

We have a similar statement in Isaiah 24:2, “as with the people so with the priest.” Those who misquote it as above do so to prove that the people will be like their priests, their religious teachers. This may be true yet the point that the prophet is aiming at is rather the reverse of this, viz., that the priests – the religious teachers – will be like the people, “like people, like priests.”

This is a truth that is confirmed by other Scriptures, and is plainly apparent in the days in which we live (see Isaiah 30:8-11; II Timothy 4:2-4). In this respect, as in commercial affairs, “supply and demand are equal.”

The people demand “smart” preachers who will “speak unto them smooth things” (cf. Isaiah 30:10), and here you have them in great abundance in the nominal Christian ministry of today to supply this demand. If only a rich “hire” (Micah 3:11) and a good “pasture” (Jeremiah 23:1) are provided, the “clergy” will accommodate themselves in the unimportant matter of morals and religion to the fancy of the people. Truly, “like people, like priests.” ■



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