

Jack Michael Outreach Ministries

A Ministry of the Watchman on the Walls, preparing God's People for the End Times

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I NOW HAVE A WEBSITE: www.jackmichaeloutreachministries.com

I am pleased to announce that a good friend of mine is in the process of developing a Website for my ministry.

In the November Teaching Letter, I explained why I continue to print hard copies of my Teaching Letters and books. That need will continue as long as necessary to minister to everyone on my mailing list.

In addition, my Teaching Letters and books will also be available electronically. Anyone who desires to read my Teaching Letters online, and download them, will be able to do so. Likewise, some of my books will also be available online, for reading, and for downloading.

NOTE: I did not print, and mail out a Teaching Letter in December 2018. However, you may read that Teaching Letter on my Website, and download a copy if you so desire.

Word from the Watchman - The Reliability of the Scriptures

In the November Teaching Letter, I explored the question: *"Is the King James Version of the Bible the Authorized Version?"* Probably, that teaching upset some people, who were clinging to the hope that the King James Version of the Bible was perfect. So, here at the beginning of a New Year, I believe the Lord has instructed me to do some follow-up teaching on **THE RELIABILITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.**

As I emphasized in that teaching, The Authorized Version(s) of the Bible are the original manuscripts penned by the Old Testament Prophets, and New Testament Apostles. Those original manuscripts were perfect; they were inerrant, and infallible, because they were penned by men who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

However, other versions of the Bible often differentiate in translation and interpretation, and some versions of the Bible actually contain errors in translation. This does not invalidate the reliability of the Scriptures!

Fortunately, we have many excellent Bible Study Helps by which we can research the languages used in the original manuscripts, and gain more understanding, and accuracy. Rarely is there a sermon preached, or a Bible lesson taught, that the Preacher, or Teacher, does not refer to the original languages for clarification, or amplification.

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Sometimes, however, it is difficult to produce a perfect translation of the Bible. Some years ago, I had the opportunity to talk extensively with a minister who worked with Wycliffe Bible Translators. The insight he shared with me provided much enlightenment.

For example, in some languages, it is almost impossible to translate the Scriptures word-for-word. To do so would render that version of the Bible as unreadable, or not understandable. The translators must diligently search for the right words in order to produce a version of the Bible that is usable for the particular language, and also usable for the culture.

Often, Bible translators must deal with cultural differences, which can change the meaning of the Scriptures. Many years ago, when I was still in the Marine Corps, I was privileged to be taught by a missionary, who was involved with evangelizing unreached people groups in the remote jungle regions of Indonesia. He shared the story of landing on a mountain top – by helicopter – and looking into five different valleys, where there lived five different tribes, with five different cultures; none of which had ever heard the Gospel story of Jesus Christ.

The missionaries and Bible translators who worked with one of these tribal groups eventually came to the account of Judas betraying Jesus. This tribe thought the story of the betrayal was wonderful, and Judas was a man to be admired. In their culture, the ability to trick someone, and experience personal gain from deception was considered a virtue! Obviously, the Bible teachers and translators had to be extremely careful, and extremely accurate in order to clearly portray the betrayal by Judas as a negative act, rather than positive one!

Even in our so-called intellectual Western Culture, we sometimes fail to interpret the Scriptures accurately. I once was in possession of a book in which born-again, Jewish Rabbis in Israel challenged our interpretation of a number of New Testament stories. For example, the encounter Jesus had with the Samaritan women at Jacob's well. As recorded in John, chapter four, Jesus said to her:

"...Go, call your husband, and come here. The woman answered and said: I have no husband. Jesus said to her: You have well said, I have no husband, for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly." (from verses 16-18 NKJV).

Continued, top of Page 3 ➤

I have heard sermons about how this woman was an out-of-control adulteress, who was consumed with lust, and had been divorced by five husbands because of her promiscuous lifestyle. Thus, when she accepted Jesus, she was delivered from a life of sin.

However, these born-again, Jewish Rabbis in Israel said she was not an adulteress. They said she was **BARREN**. Five husbands had divorced her, because she could not produce offspring. Now - out of desperation - she was living with someone who was not her husband. Thus, when she accepted Jesus, she was saved from a life of utter rejection. After receiving salvation, it could be said about her:

*“To the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us **ACCEPTED** in the Beloved.”* (Ephesians 1:6 NKJV).

So, this brings up a question. Because of difficulties in translating the Bible from language to language, and because of different interpretations due to cultural differences, how reliable are the Scriptures?

If these matters were left entirely in the hands of men, the Scriptures would eventually erode, and become unreliable. Fortunately, such matters are not left entirely in the hands of men. Listen to 1 Peter 1:24-25:

*“For **ALL MEN** are like grass, and **ALL THEIR GLORY** (the best that man can do) is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, **BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD STANDS** (endures, or remains firm) **FOREVER.**”* (NIV).

The fact is: Bible translators have come and gone. Some committed errors in translation. Most - to the best of their ability - did a good job in fulfilling the calling of God upon their lives. Then, they all died.

Meanwhile, God has watched over his Word throughout all the ages, to keep the Scriptures reliable to every generation:

*“For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and **HIS TRUTH ENDURES TO ALL GENERATIONS.**”* (Psalm 100:5 NKJV).

In November, I also shared that I had the privilege of attending a lecture taught by a Theologian, whom many consider to be the foremost authority in the world on New Testament Manuscripts.

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In that lecture, I was greatly surprised to learn that there are more than 5,000 New Testament Manuscripts. When comparing manuscript to manuscript, we learn that there are some differences. Some manuscripts contain portions of Scripture, which other manuscripts do not contain.

However, and this is **VERY IMPORTANT**. Every New Testament Manuscript – that has ever been discovered – presents a clear and reliable account of the **GOSPEL** of the Lord Jesus Christ. This means that every New Testament Manuscript includes the following...

- ⇒ Salvation is entirely **A WORK OF GOD'S GRACE**. No one can earn Salvation by their own efforts.
- ⇒ Salvation is available **ONLY** through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and his shed blood for the remission of our sins.
- ⇒ Salvation provides us with a **FREE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS** (or, a right standing with God, the Father) through Jesus Christ.
- ⇒ Salvation provides us with **ETERNAL LIFE**, where we will live forever in the presence of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ.

So, despite the imperfections of man – in his efforts to translate the Bible – God has been watching over his Word throughout the ages, to ensure that the Scriptures remain reliable, and every generation of people have the opportunity to freely partake of his grace, and experience his mercy! The following characteristics of the Gospel have always been valid, and will remain valid until Jesus Christ returns...

- ⇒ Salvation is **FREE** of any charge. It is not just available to the wealthy, but also to the poor.
- ⇒ Salvation does not require a certain level of **EDUCATION**. It is available to the intelligent, and also to the less educated (Salvation is even available to the illiterate).
- ⇒ Salvation crosses all borders, and is not rendered ineffective due to cultural differences. Salvation is available to Indians living in remote jungles, and to Royals living in palaces.
- ⇒ On the Day of Judgment, no one will have an excuse, as to why they rejected God's gift of Salvation.

*"For the grace of God that brings salvation **HAS APPEARED TO ALL MEN ... but as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.**" (Titus 2:11 & John 1:12 NKJV).*

God's Word has always been reliable, and will always be reliable!