

DANGERS IN MODERN TRANSLATIONS #3 (KING JAMES VERSION ISSUES)

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There are things that must be addressed and pointed out in connection with the KJV... the issues that we must deal with when critiquing the KJV are not in the same category as the damnable doctrines that have entered into the modern translations of the Bible.

In any discussion of the dangers of modern translations, one must acknowledge and deal with criticisms leveled against the King James Version. At this point in our articles on dangers of modern translations I wanted to address the so-called “problems” with the KJV. Let me state at the outset that I maintain that the “issues” concerning the KJV are not in the same category or eternal consequence as “problems” with modern translations. Following are criticisms leveled against the KJV:

1. *The KJV of 1611 is different than the KJV of today.* It is true that the KJV of today is not the same as the KJV of 1611, but the differences have to do with spelling and matters in this category. For example, “wordes” is changed to “words,” “amongst” is changed to “among.” So don’t let anyone ever tell you that we don’t have the same King James today. This is much ado about nothing.

2. *People say the KJV cannot be understood today by the average person because of so many archaic words found in it.* The immediate response to this criticism is that the word archaic simply means “old.” It does not mean it’s not accurate. Some time ago the Trinitarian Bible Society of London, England, put out a list of archaic words found in the KJV and they only noted some 618 words. There are 791,328 words in the KJV. So clearly, the 618 number (0.00078%) is insignificant when compared to the whole Bible. A couple well known examples are “conversation” (Phil. 1:27) which today means “conduct” and “prevent” (1 Thess. 4:15) which today means “precede.” Many KJV’s update these words in their margin and a good Bible student will get a concordance or a collegiate dictionary to update these archaic words. Remember, an archaism is old; it is not error. I will say more about the readability of

the KJV later.

3. *The KJV uses the word “Easter” instead of the correct translation “Passover” in Acts 12:4.* In this verse, the word “easter” is a seasonal reference only. It is not advocating the observance of the Old Testament Passover festival. R. C. Trench and other scholars, I believe, correctly conclude that it was simply an oversight on the part of the KJV translators who had removed the word “Easter” from every other place it had been in earlier translations and correctly rendered “paska” Passover (*On Bible Revision*, pp.34-35). In either case, it does not teach the observance of Easter or Passover today.

4. *The KJV uses the English word “hell” which is inaccurate.* The old English word hell denotes something that is covered and unseen which would include the *temporary abode of the dead* (*hades* [Strongs #86], found 10 times) and the *everlasting punishment of the wicked* (*gehenna* [Strongs #1067], found 12 times). This can easily be verified by using Strong’s concordance. In fact, if you check collegiate dictionaries, both of these concepts are a part of the defined word hell. So after checking the etymology of the English word hell, the so-called error of the KJV disappears. However, this is one of those occasions when one would want to go back to the original Hebrew and Greek word for further word studies.

5. *The KJV tends to be Calvinistic.* This is one of the most absurd of all of the charges against the KJV because Restoration leaders and the great debaters among churches of Christ all used the KJV to annihilate the tenets of Calvinism. I was raised in the Methodist Church. In 1972, the preacher who converted me used the KJV to show me the errors of Calvinism and denominationalism. I have been preaching for 44 years and as

many preachers do, I preach on the errors of Calvinism by using only the KJV.

6. *The KJV originally contained the Apocrypha.* Many major translations of the Bible have included the Apocrypha (uninspired writings used to shed light upon the intertestamental period). These writings are never included as a part of the Old Testament or New Testament text or canon. This is another unwarranted criticism.

7. *The KJV is in “Elizabethan English” which nobody speaks today.* We certainly don’t agree with his theology, but textual scholar Edward Hills speaks on the misconception that the English of the KJV is Elizabethan: “The English of the King James Version is not the English of the early 17th century. To be exact, it is not a type of English that was ever spoken anywhere. It is biblical English, which was not used on ordinary occasions even by the translators who produced the King James Version...One need only compare the preface written by the translators with the text of their translation to feel the difference in style...Its style is that of the Hebrew and of the New Testament Greek. Even in their use of thee and thou, the translators were not following 17th century English usage but biblical usage, for at the time these translators were doing their work these singular forms had already been replaced by the plural you in polite conversation” (*The King James Version Defended*, pp.218). In other words, “thee” and “thou” usage shows how accurate and precise the KJV translators were when translating singular and plural pronouns (see John 3:7, thee, singular; ye, plural). I get very weary when people start talking to me about the “thees” and the “thous” found in the KJV. They are showing their ignorance. These same people would not advocate taking these words out of

our songbooks — as an example: “*my faith looks up to Thee, thou Lamb of Calvary.*”

I would further comment about the KJV that as far as readability is concerned, when various readability software programs have been applied to the KJV, the results show that it is just as readable and sometimes easier to read than modern translations. I would also point out that in the translation process, accuracy is more important than simplicity. It has been said that it is better to “educate up”

than “translate down,” and I would agree!

Clearly, there are things that must be addressed and pointed out in connection with the KJV. I emphasize again that the issues that we must deal with when critiquing the KJV are not in the same category as the damnable doctrines that have entered into the modern translations of the Bible.

It's also important to note that not all modern translations are equally egregious or erroneous. When I

started this series of articles I said that I recognized that the King James translators were not perfect men or inspired men. I further stated that I recognized that, on occasion, we must go back to the original languages of the Bible for word studies and full meaning and clarification. My position is therefore again stated — the King James Version is superior and best, not perfect.

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Inherit The Earth...

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exalt thee to inherit the land” (v.34).

When David sang, “*The meek shall inherit the earth*” (Psalm 37:11), he was not telling the Jews that they would rule the whole world. God is not giving them the globe. David used “*the earth*” as a metaphor to assure them that they would have all the promises God had made to them through Abraham, including their land.

God did not promise to give his church the land of Israel. Jesus used the same “*inherit the earth*” metaphor to assure his disciples that they would enjoy all the spiritual blessing they were promised. Jesus is not affirming a “renewed earth” in the beatitudes.

Before we give up our hope of heaven for an eternal earth, we ought to read the rest of the sermon. In the Sermon on the Mount, heaven is always greater than the earth. Immediately after the beatitudes Jesus said, “*Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven*” (Matt. 5:11-12). He did not say, “Great will be your reward on the earth.” The reward of the prophets was in heaven, and our reward will be there too. Jesus said, “*Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven*” (Matt. 6:19-21). Hear it, “*...not on earth,*” but “*...in heaven.*” Jesus is not teaching heaven on earth. We cannot lay earthly treasures up for ourselves in heaven.

Jesus does not want us focused on earthly blessings like those promised

to earthly Israel. Jesus said the heaven and earth would “*pass.*” He said, “*Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled*” (Matt. 5:18). The law that gave the Jews their earthly inheritance would be fulfilled, the fulfilled law would pass, and with it all the earthly hopes under that law, for heaven and earth itself would someday pass, but the spiritual blessings of the spiritual kingdom will endure. In the next verse Jesus said, “*Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt. 5:19).

Greatness in the spiritual kingdom of heaven is not for those who keep the law of Moses, but for those who keep the commandments of Jesus. Their righteousness would “*exceed*” the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, not because they would be more strict in keeping the old commandments, but because they would be keeping exceeding commandments of an exceeding law of an exceeding kingdom. Without this exceeding righteousness they would “*in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt. 5:20).

Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*” (Matt. 6:10). Renewed earth advocates renew the old premillennial assertion that the will of God will be done on the earth after the Lord returns, but in this sermon, Jesus is speaking of the kingdom that was “*at hand*” (Matt. 4:17). When this kingdom came, the Father’s will for its establishment was “*done in earth*” as it was conceived “*in*

heaven,” but that did not make the earth heaven.

Our Father is in heaven. We are to glorify the “*Father which is in heaven*” (Matt. 5:16). In behavior, we are to be “*children of our Father which is in heaven*” (Matt. 5:45), and “*Be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect*” (Matt. 5:7). We hope for a reward of our “*Father which is in heaven*” (Matt. 6:1). We pray to “*Our Father which art in heaven*” (Matt. 6:9). He is our “*heavenly Father*” (Matt. 7:32). Heaven is “*God’s throne*” (Matt. 5:34); earth is “*his footstool*” (Matt. 5:35). We do not expect God to leave his throne in heaven and sit with us forever on his footstool.

At the end of the sermon Jesus said: “*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*” (Matt. 7:21). There is a sense in which we “*enter the kingdom of heaven*” when we obey the Gospel, because that is when we are added to the church, but in the immediate context of this passage there are eternal consequences in view. In the next verse Jesus said, “*Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*” (Matt. 7:22-23).

Jesus was not advocating an earthly hope in the Sermon on the Mount. In the context of spiritual blessings, the “*meek*” would “*inherit the earth*” in “*the kingdom of heaven*” that was “*at hand.*”

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