



Volume 16 Issue 31

August 1, 2021

ACCURATE UNDERSTANDING

When the gospel of Jesus Christ was first being preached by the Apostles, God provided a way for all to hear and understand, even overcoming normal language barriers between different regions through the work of the Holy Spirit in the ability to speak in tongues.

“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language,” (Acts 2:4-6). While the gift of tongues provided the ability for the presenter of the gospel to communicate God’s word understandably to individuals who spoke different

languages, it was preserved in the written form entirely in the Greek language. While this undoubtedly provided challenges for non-Greek speaking people to be able to read the gospel, much work has been done to again remove the language barriers by translating the written Word in other languages. While this certainly makes it much easier to read and understand the New Testament in our own English language rather than being forced to learn Greek before one could understand the gospel, we do need to keep in mind that translations of the New Testament from Greek into English (as well as all other languages) were not overseen by the guidance of the Holy Spirit and are solely the work of men. The only language truly overseen by the Holy Spirit (as far as the New Testament is

concerned) was the Greek language as inspired men preserved God's message in the written form. *"But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God," (2 Pet. 1:20-21).*

While I put a great deal of trust in the accuracy of learned language scholars in the English translation of Scripture, significant differences between English and Greek make the necessity for valuable study tools such as Greek lexicons and dictionaries that much greater. One major difference to be noted is that the Greek language has many more words than the English language, often creating a great difficulty for translators to portray the exact meaning of certain Greek words in English (in English one would need to note the context the word "love" fell in to decipher whether it was describing a passionate or familial type of love, while the Greek has 4 different words for love, all specific in nature corresponding to a specific type of love...for example, the conversation between Jesus and Peter in Jn. 21:15-17 contains two different Greek words for

love, each specific in meaning, while the English translation simply gives the same word "love" each time). This creates another challenge, in that the limited number of English words available to precisely match up with the Greek can often lead to less than accurate renderings in meaning in the English text. This means that while translators have done their best to locate the most adequate English words to correspond with the Greek, the inability for certain English words to match up precisely with the exact meaning of the Greek can often lead to misunderstandings in the text when we rely *solely* on the English translation. One example is the passage we read in 1 Thessalonians 5:22: *"Abstain from all appearance of evil."* Relying solely upon the English rendering we often come to the conclusion that this verse is teaching to abstain from items which may not be evil in themselves but could be misinterpreted as evil on the surface by their appearance. Upon the aid of study tools which allow us to see the original Greek and definition, we find the word translated *"appearance"* had the original literal meaning of form, shape, figure, sight rendering the

passage to mean we must stay away from evil in all of its varied forms rather than things which could be mistaken for evil (it becomes even clearer that this was the intended meaning of the verse by studying the use of the exact same Greek word translated “*appearance*” in other passages: “*and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a Dove,*” Lk.

3:22... ”*And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form,*”

Jn. 5:37). Another example is in the KJV rendering of 1 Thessalonians 4:15: “*For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.*”

Our English word “*prevent*” is typically understood to mean to keep something from occurring or to put a stop to something, while the Greek word originally written had the specific definition of to come before or precede. Examples like these certainly make study tools such as Strong’s Concordance, Thayer’s Greek Lexicon, and Vines Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words much needed tools in the library of every

Christian seeking to be guided by an accurate understanding of the Word of God (and if your short on cash and have a computer, simply download the free bible computer software e-sword which will allow you to place your cursor over every word in the Bible and see the original written word and definition). – Daniel Ruegg



MONTHLY CHALLENGE

DIRECTIONS: Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.

1) Bible Study Challenge

Exodus 12:21-22 *"Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel and said to them, 'Go and take for yourselves lambs according to your families, and slay the Passover lamb. You shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood which is in the basin, and apply some of the blood that is in the basin to the lintel and the two doorposts; and none of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning.'"* It is amazing how all throughout the Old Testament, there were constant pictures and themes of Jesus, which He was constantly fulfilling throughout His time on earth. "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" John 1:29. Jesus was constantly making references to these prophetic statements about Him to reveal He was the Christ the Old Testament was preparing the world for. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up," Jn. 3:14. "I am the bread that came down out of heaven," Jn. 6:41. Take some time this month to go through statements like these that Jesus made and see how many references and pictures from the old testament you can find that show God was revealing Jesus the whole time!

2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

Ecclesiastes 7:11-22

"Wisdom along with an inheritance is good and an advantage to those who see the sun. For wisdom is protection just as money is protection, but the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the lives of its possessors. Consider the work of God, for who is able to straighten what He has bent? In the day of prosperity be happy, but in the day of adversity consider – God has made the one as well as the other so that man will not discover anything that will be after him. I have seen everything during my lifetime of futility; there is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness. Do not be excessively righteous and do not be overly wise. Why should you ruin yourself? Do not be excessively wicked and do not be a fool. Why should you die before your time? It is good that you grasp one thing and also not let go of the other; for the one who fears God comes forth with both of them. Wisdom strengthens a wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city. Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins. Also, do not take seriously all words which are spoken, so that you will not hear your servant cursing you. For you also have realized that you likewise have many times cursed others."