



Seek The Old Paths

“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths. . . and walk therein”
(Jeremiah 6:16)

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THE MEEK SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH

Bill Boyd

*Before we give up our hope of heaven for an eternal earth,
we ought to read the rest of the sermon.*

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). Premillennialists have taken Matthew 5:5 as a proof text that they will live and reign on the earth for a thousand years. Also, those who are advocating for a “renewed earth” take it to say that they will live on the earth forever. It is like a millennial reign that never ends.

Many of the Jews in the days of Jesus expected the kingdom of God to come as an earthly kingdom. They thought Jews would displace the Romans as rulers of the world. Matthew wrote with these Jews in mind. He frequently called the kingdom of God, “the kingdom of heaven.” He is the only writer that did this. He knew his audience. The kingdom is “of heaven,” because it is not “of earth.” It is a spiritual kingdom; not another earthly one. Worldly-minded Jews, premillennialists, and renewed earth advocates of today all have a worldly view with an earthly hope.

Context is a fundamental rule of hermeneutics. Matthew 5:5 is part of the Sermon on the Mount. John and Jesus were preaching, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:2; 4:17). “Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom” (Matt. 4:23). Those who heard Jesus preach the Sermon on the Mount recognized that it was “his doctrine” (Matt. 7:25). The Sermon on the Mount is a sermon on

the kingdom. It is the doctrine of Christ about the kingdom of heaven. It begins, “Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:3). That is the first of eight introductory beatitudes. In the last beatitude he said, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:10). The beatitudes begin and end with a promise of the kingdom that was “at hand.”

The blessings of these beatitudes would come when the kingdom came. The mourners would be comforted; the spiritually hungry would be filled; the merciful would obtain mercy; the pure in heart would see God; the peacemakers would be called the children of God. All the blessings of the beatitudes are spiritual, and they are all realized in the Lord’s church. It is in this context that Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). Jesus did not promise a spiritual blessing for the poor in spirit and slight the meek with an earthly one. In the context of Matthew 5:5, “the earth” is a metaphor. Jesus is using the language of Psalm 37:11. “The earth” is a metaphor there as well. Understanding the metaphor in the Psalm will help us appreciate the metaphor in the Lord’s Sermon.

In the 37th Psalm, the land that God had promised to the children of Abraham was overrun with evil. In response, the psalmist admonished

the children to Israel to be meek. The psalm explains the meaning of meekness: “Fret not... neither be thou envious...” (v.1); “Trust in the LORD, and do good...” (v.3); “Delight thyself also in the LORD...” (v.4); “Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him...” (v.5); “Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself...” (v.7); “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any way to do evil” (v.8).

Meekness is not weakness. The meek “trust in the Lord,” “fret not,” and “wait patiently for him” (Psalm 37:3,1,7). God assured the meek that they would dwell in the land and receive their inheritance. “So shall thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed” (v.3). The promise is repeated throughout the psalm: “He shall give thee the desires of thy heart...” (v.4); “He shall bring it to pass...” (v.5); “Evildoers shall be cut off, but they that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth” (v.9); “The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” (v.11); “The LORD knoweth the upright, and their inheritance shall be forever” (v.18); “For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth” (v.22); “The righteous shall inherit the land, and shall dwell therein forever” (v.29); “Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall

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Inherit The Earth...



Editorial...

HEAVEN ON EARTH? No! #1

Garland M. Robinson

Where will the redeemed be in eternity when this life is over? The Bible teaches they will go to be with the Lord in heaven (John 14:1-3). Yet, some are saying the heaven we've always hoped for does not exist — that it's not going to be in heaven above (God's dwelling place), but it's going to be on earth below (man's dwelling place). They imagine that God's sole purpose through the ages has been to restore this sin cursed earth to its original condition (like that of Adam and Eve) and that man will live upon a "refurbished" and "renovated" earth for ever. They call this "reversing the curse." But, according to inspiration, Peter wrote that this world, including everything God made and everything man made, will "pass away," be "burned up," "melt," "dissolved," GONE! (2 Peter 3:10-13).

It's a false doctrine that says the redeemed have no hope of going to that realm beyond this world called heaven. Instead, this false doctrine teaches that God will leave His throne in Heaven and come down to live with the redeemed "on a refurbished earth." Sad indeed, but some of our own brethren are teaching and preaching that at the Judgment, Heaven will not be in eternity where God dwells, but will be on this Earth where man dwells. That God will come down from heaven and live with man on the earth, to them, is a very appealing and comforting doctrine!

Though this doctrine may be new to many, it's not new. It's been around for a long long time. It raises its ugly head now and then and is always put down by faithful brethren. Then another group arises who consider they've "dug deep" in the Bible and have found a new gem that's never before been discovered.

"Heaven on Earth" is a doctrine rooted in MATERIALISM. Materialism considers physical, tangible, material things, more important than spiritual things. Its core belief is that

"substance is everything" — this world is everything.

Jehovah's Witness have held on to materialism their entire existence (a little more than 140yrs). They also teach that eternal life will be on earth. Except in some ways, they are closer to the truth than some of our own brethren. Jehovah's Witness doctrine says there is a heaven above, but that it's already full (holding only 144,000). The rest of the saved will live on a refurbished earth for eternity.

Anyone reading through the Bible, in even the most casual manner, would NEVER get the idea that eternal life will be on this earth (unless that's what your looking for)! One needs help to see this idea in the Bible! And, sadly, there are many who stand ready to help.

Notice what Jesus said and taught about heaven...

Heaven is where God the Father is — His dwelling place. Jesus spoke of God His father "which is in heaven" at least 7 times. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21; cf. 10:32,33; 12:50; 16:17; 18:10,19).

Jesus spoke of God as our/your Father which is in heaven at least 14 times. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven." "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:16,45,48; 6:1,14,26,32; 7:11; 18:14,35; 23:9; Mark 11:25,26; Luke 11:13).

Heaven is God's Throne / Christ's Throne. This is mentioned at least 9 times in the New Testament. "Heaven...is God's throne" (Matt 5:34). "Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool" (Acts 7:49). "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (Matt 25:31). "But unto

the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever..." (Heb. 1:8. Matt. 23:22; Rev. 4:2; 5:13; 16:17; 20:11).

The earth is God's footstool, not his throne. "Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest" (Acts 7:49; cf. Isa. 66:1). God cannot be confined to a physical house or place of rest like the earth — that's ridiculous. At the dedication of the temple, Solomon said, "...will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded" (1 Kings 8:27)? He prays to God in verse 30, "...hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, forgive." Heaven on Earth doctrine takes God off His throne in heaven and brings Him down to earth to sit on his floor mat.

Jesus can't ever be a King or Priest on the earth. It is impossible for Jesus to ever occupy a throne on earth. Zechariah 6:12-13 speaks of the reign of the Messiah saying: "...he shall build the temple of the LORD; ...and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne." Hebrews 8:1-4 says He can't be a priest on earth. And, since he can't be a priest on earth, he can't be a king on earth because Zechariah says he will be both a king and priest at the same time. Also, Jeremiah 22:28-30 forbids the Lord Jesus from ever reigning on the throne in Judah (Zion). Coniah, king of Judah, was so corrupt that we read in verse 30: "Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah." Jesus is a descendant of Coniah (Jeconiah, Jehoichin), mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew as Jechonias (Matt. 1:11-12). He can't be king on earth!

The Scriptures always speak of heaven being "up" — at least 18 times. "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19; cf. Matt. 14:19; Mark 6:41; 7:34; Luke 9:16; 18:13; 24:51; John 1:51; 3:13,31; 17:1;

Acts 1:10,11; 2:34; 7:55,56; 11:10; Rom. 10:6).

The Scriptures always speak of coming “down from” heaven — at least 20 times. “For I came **down from heaven**, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38; cf. Luke 9:54; John 1:51; 3:15; 6:33,38,41,42,50,51,58; Acts 11:5; Rom. 10:6; 1 Peter 1:12; Rev. 3:12; 10:1; 13:13; 18:1; 20:1; 21:2).

The expression “from heaven” is used more than 45 times in the New Testament. The point is, heaven is not earth. Earth is not heaven. They are two separate and distinct places. “The baptism of John, whence was it? **from heaven**, or of men” (Matt. 21:25; cf. Matt. 16:1; 28:2; Mark 8:11; 11:30,31; Luke 11:16; 17:29; 20:4,5; 22:43; John 1:32; 3:13,27,31; 6:32,33,38,41,42,50,51,58; Acts 11:5,9; Rom. 1:18; 1 Cor. 15:47; 2 Cor. 5:2; Gal. 1:8; 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:16; 2 Thess. 1:7; Heb. 12:25; 1 Peter 1:12; 2 Peter 1:18; Rev. 10:1,4,8; 11:12; 13:13; 14:2,13; 18:1,4; 20:1).

God speaks “from” his lofty place “in” heaven — at least 6 times. “And there came a voice **from heaven**, saying, *Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*” (Mark 1:11; cf. Matt. 3:17; Luke 3:22; John 12:28; Acts 10:15; Deut. 4:36; 30:11-14).

We “pray” to God who is “in” heaven. Jesus taught his disciples, “After this manner therefore pray ye: *Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name*” (Matt. 6:9). Jesus said, “...When ye pray, say, *Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name*” (Luke 11:2). God told Solomon, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; **then will I hear from heaven**, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14; cf. Psalm 20:6; 1 Kings 8:30-32, 34, 36, 39, 43, 45, 49).

The angels of God are “in” heaven — found at least 12 times. “For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as **the angels of God in heaven**” (Matt. 22:30). “For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven” (Mark 12:25). See also Matt. 18:10; 24:36; 28:2; Mark 13:32; Luke 2:15; John

1:51; Gal. 1:8; 2 Thess. 1:7; Rev. 8:13; 12:7).

Our reward is “in” heaven. Found at least 9 times. “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for **great is your reward in heaven...**” (Matt. 5:12; cf. Luke 6:23). He did not say our reward is great “on earth,” he said our reward is great “in heaven.” Jesus said, “**Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth**, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: **But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:19-21). If heaven is going to be on earth, then Jesus missed a great opportunity here to tell us. But he didn’t miss the opportunity, he told the truth about our eternal reward — heaven is NOT going to be on earth. He knew there would be a false doctrine arise that taught heaven will be on the renovated earth, so he drove a death-knell through its heart in these verses. Our heart must be focused on heaven, not on the earth (Col. 3:1-2). Also, Paul wrote the church at Corinth, saying, “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, **an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens**” (2 Cor. 5:1, it’s not on earth in this verse). Our physical (earthly) body will be changed into a spiritual (heavenly) body and we will be with God “in the heavens,” not on the earth. (See also Mark 10:21; 12:33; Luke 18:22; 2 Cor. 5:1-2).

Heaven and earth are different places. Jesus told the apostles, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and **whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven**: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt 16:19; 18:18). God did not allow the apostles to make their own laws (bind on earth) and then he would honor it in heaven (bind it in heaven). The point is, whatever they “bind on earth” will have already been “bound in heaven.” When the apostles spoke and wrote, they did so by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The emphasis we’re calling attention to is that “heaven” and “earth” are two different places. God dwells in heaven above and we dwell on the

earth below. First Corinthians 15:47-49 says, “*The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.*” See also Matt. 28:18; Mark 11:30; Luke 10:20; 20:4; Acts 4:24; 14:15; 17:24; Eph. 1:10; 3:15.

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"THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH" #1

Gary McDade

Isaiah, the Messianic Prophet, foretold of the coming kingdom of Christ which is the church of Christ (Matt. 16:18-19) using terms like "the mountain of the Lord's house" (Isa. 2:2-3; cf. 1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:6), "his kingdom" (Isa. 9:6-7; cf. Matt. 4:17; Mark 9:1; Acts 1:6-8; 2:1-4), "my holy mountain" (Isa. 11:9; 56:7; 57:13; 65:11, 25; 66:20; cf. Heb. 12:22-23, 28), "the way of holiness" (Isa. 35:8; cf. John 14:6; Acts 9:2), and "the new heavens and the new earth" (Isa. 65:17-19; 66:22-23; cf. Acts 3:21; Eph. 1:10).

Isaiah wrote, "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain" (Isa. 66:22). The respected Old Testament scholar Edward J. Young (1907-1968) correctly observed in his monumental work on Isaiah regarding "the new heavens and the new earth,"

With this verse the prophet makes known the foundation for the entire preceding line of thought. By *your seed* and *your name* he has in mind the spiritual Israel of which he has been speaking. *Seed* refers to the descendants of the people of God, who form the subject of this address. Their perpetuity is to be assured. *Name* indicates reputation; forever the Church will be recognized as the people whom God has chosen to be His own. To assure God's people of this perpetuity and constant recognition God institutes a comparison with the new heavens and the new earth. As God originally created the heavens and the earth, so now He is going to make (the participle suggests near futurity) *new heavens* and a *new earth*, which will stand before Him (i.e. under His constant care and protection; cf. 48:19; 53:2). The old Israel will pass away; but from it there will spring the remnant that has survived the judgment [i.e., the Babylonian Captivity 606 B.C. to 536 B.C.], and together with it will be a great influx of Gentiles, all of which will form

the true Israel of God under the new dispensation (*The Book of Isaiah*, vol. 3, p.535).

The new dispensation or Christian age began on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ from the dead when 3,000 were added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47). The addition of the Gentiles to the church was precisely that which Isaiah was pointing to in the mid-eighth century B.C. Paul so affirmed in Ephesians 1:10 when he wrote, "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him." He went on to elaborate on this fulfillment in Ephesians 2:11ff when he spoke of the Gentiles being outside of Christ and without the hope of salvation, "but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." He said, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

"The new heavens and the new earth" are "the household of God" made up of obedient Jews and Gentiles in the one body, the church. The Bible certifies, "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:20-22). And, members of the church are recognized as "the Israel of God" in Galatians 6:16, "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH IN CONTEXT

The prophetic language of Isaiah to foretell the future events from his point in time of the return from Babylonian Captivity and later on the establishment of the church of Christ must not be confused with the second coming of Christ or, especially, the erroneous system of premillennialism. Bear in mind that in Isaiah's day the

Babylonian Captivity was over the horizon of time from his perspective by more than 100 years. In the mid-eighth century B.C. he is still urging the Southern Kingdom of Judah to cease their wicked ways (Isa. 1:16-20) and know that their idolatry precipitates their punishment which is coming in the form of the Babylonian Captivity (Isa. 10:10-11; 31:5-7; 44; 45:16; 57:5).

The prophetic language of Isaiah must be understood as first used by Isaiah before echoes of similar language can be understood in New Testament passages like, for example, Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, Revelation 6:15-16, and Revelation 21:23-25. Four such passages from Isaiah will serve to illustrate.

First, Isaiah wrote of Judah's impending punishment for idolatry in Isaiah 2:18-21 as he pictured the fear and foreboding of those practicing idolatry when the Babylonian Captivity begins, "And the idols he shall utterly abolish. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth." The apostle John draws upon this fearful language as the sixth seal is opened in the book of Revelation to allow his first century A.D. readers to picture God's judgment upon the persecutors of the church of Christ (Rev. 6:12-17).

Isaiah was prophesying the Babylonian Captivity, not the persecution of the church in the early centuries A.D. John's readers would be familiar with such language from reading Isaiah and immediately see the application of it to the situation John was addressing in the Apocalypse. The scholars point out that of the 404 verses in the book of Revelation, while there are no direct quotations, 348 allusions to the Old Testament are made

of which 95 are repeated thereby representing an average of ten per chapter in Revelation. Of that number 79 are from the book of Isaiah making it the most quoted Old Testament book within the book of Revelation representing an average of three per chapter in Revelation. So, the book of Isaiah is used abundantly by John in Revelation. (Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation*, p.101; Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, *The New Testament In The Original Greek*, pp. 612-618; H.B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of Saint John*, p. cxl.)

Second, Isaiah's words in chapter 13:10-11 sound like the end of the world, "For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible." And, to speak of the end of the Southern Kingdom of Judah would for those Jews be the end of their world as they knew it. But, the language was not to be taken literally because Isaiah himself told them initially that a remnant of one tenth of the people would be spared and return to Jerusalem one day (Isa. 1:9; 6:13). Similarly, when that same language is used by Matthew, Mark, and Luke it is used of a cataclysmic event, not at the end of time, but within time, specifically, at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D. (Matt. 24:29; Mark 13:24-25; Luke 21:25-26).

Third, the call of the Israelites that had been scattered to Assyria and Egypt would be like that of "the great trumpet blown" and those people would return to worship together once more at Jerusalem (Isa. 27:13). This "great trumpet blown" was not the "last trump" at the end of the world mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:52, but was metaphorical, finding fulfillment on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ in 33 A.D. when those same nations (those geographical territories) specifically are mentioned as gathering to hear the first Gospel sermon (Acts 2:9-11). Nor is Matthew referring to the "last trump" in Matthew 24:31 when he speaks of "a great sound of a trumpet" but to Christ in heaven (v.30) sending

His judgment upon Jerusalem in 70 A.D. for rejecting and crucifying Him.

Fourth, Isaiah described the restoration of the Southern Kingdom of Judah to Zion or Jerusalem after the Captivity in Isaiah 60:11, 19-20 and "weaves into the picture images from various realms of creation — light, man, animals, gold, incense, birds, the majestic trees of the forest" (Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on Isaiah*, pp. 485-486). Isaiah wrote, "Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. ... The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting

light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." For those exiled Jews, this was a thrilling expectation to return again to their cherished home, "The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 60:15). Some of the language used by Isaiah, the apostle John through the inspiration of God, saw fitting to apply to the eternal city of heaven in Revelation 21:23-25. But, Isaiah was not talking about heaven when he wrote in the eighth century B.C.; he was referring to Jerusalem. And, as stated earlier, "The prophetic language of Isaiah to foretell the future events from his point in time of the return from Babylonian Captivity and later on the establishment of the church of Christ must not be confused with the second coming of Christ or, especially, the erroneous system of premillennialism."

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WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION

No one can be faithful before God without meeting obligations. Though many try, it cannot be done. The obligation of all men is to obey the Gospel to be saved (Matt. 7:21; Heb. 5:8-9; 1 Peter 1:22). When men obey the Gospel, the Lord adds them to his church (the church of Christ, Acts 2:41,47). Being a member of the Lord's church carries with it many obligations.

1) **We have the obligation to love the church.** "...Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25; Acts 20:28)! When we love the church it will be shown by our actions. What we love, we take care of, support and defend.

2) **We have the obligation to put the church first.** "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). This sums up every Christian's duty. In all things, in every place, at all times, put the church first! One cannot go to heaven without it. The church must come before pleasure, job, self, friends or family!

3) **We have the obligation to be faithful to the church.** "Be thou faithful unto death..." (Rev. 2:10). No matter what the circumstance or situation, be faithful. "...It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2). Without being faithful, we will never hear the Lord say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21).

4) **We have the obligation to defend the cause of Christ.** "Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). These are not just words that take up space. These are heaven's words! Many have either never read this verse or are too weak to obey it. We must take up the spiritual fight for truth, it's the only thing that can save (John 8:32). Ezekiel 22:30 reads, "I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none." John the baptist stood up for the truth and was beheaded (Matt. 14:10). Jesus did and was crucified (Matt. 27:35). Stephen did and was stoned (Acts 7:59). Paul did and was stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19). Elders especially, and all defenders of the faith are to "hold fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9). Who will step up stop the mouths of false teachers?

— Garland M. Robinson

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

Randy Kea

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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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

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