

The Sacred Scrolls of the Scriptures (A.E. Knoch 1874-1965)

Some insightful comments from one I have come to recognize as the premiere commentator on the Scriptures. He was a life-long Bible student and created “The Concordant New Testament,” an extremely consistent and literal translation of the New Testament.

The Greek language

“The Persian world empire was conquered by Alexander who overran the holy land, taking Jerusalem without a struggle. As a result of his conquests the Greek language was spread among all nations and became the common medium of communication for the peoples dwelling near the Mediterranean Sea.

Not only the Jews of the dispersion but those who remained in the land gradually took up the Greek language. Hence, when the Scriptures were translated into that tongue, the Hebrew text was soon left for the rabbis in the synagogues. The Greek translation took its place in common use. The tongue of Jews became Greek.

Our Lord and His disciples spoke Greek. Only occasionally they used a familiar word or phrase from the Aramaic, which was probably a corruption of the ancient Hebrew. Only the learned were sufficiently acquainted with the Hebrew to read the prophets.

Doubtless it was God’s plan to use this change in language to reach the other nations, as He afterward did through the apostle Paul. But the use of Greek was quite as necessary to reach the Jews themselves both in the land and among the dispersion.

Paul’s letters contrasted with the Circumcision (Jewish) writings

Paul’s epistles are complete in themselves, and the other writings are complete in themselves. Let the reader try the following experiment. Read the entire Greek Scriptures through from Matthew to Revelation, omitting Paul’s letters. It will be found a complete and elaborate development of the Hebrew Scriptures. All the promises and prophecies of the earlier revelation are fulfilled.

All of the writings of the Circumcision concern the same people, the same land, the same promises, the same hope which is brought before us in the writings of Moses and the prophets. Blessing can come to the earth only through them and subordinate to them. They are the royal priesthood through whom the balance of mankind may approach Jehovah and to whom all nations must be subject. The sphere of all this is terrestrial, however heavenly in character the blessing may be. All depends upon the nation of Israel – it is the only channel of blessing.

Now, if we turn to Paul’s epistles, all this is reversed. Blessing flows from Israel’s *defection* and is confined to the period of their *rejection*. It is not concerned with the earth. Its sphere of operation is in the heavens. Its object is their redemption by means of an election out of both Israel and the nations during the era in which the Jew is set aside. [see Romans 11:25-27]

Let the student once see that the artificial division into “Old” and “New Testament” is false, let him prove to his own satisfaction that Matthew heralds the King foretold by the prophets, that the kingdom and priesthood of Israel are the controlling themes of the writings of the Circumcision apostles and that the Revelation is but the fulfillment of the promises from Genesis to Jude, and he will marvel at the wisdom of God in His plans for earth’s redemption.

Then, leaving all this to those for whom it is intended, let us descend into the depths with Paul and taste the grace which turns to those outside the covenant, to whom no promises were made, whose highest hope was to find some crumbs at Israel’s overflowing board, and see them justified and reconciled – graces far more precious than could be brought to them through Israel’s restoration.

Then we receive a hope above and beyond the expectation of the earthly people. Grace places us out of reach of the awful judgments which alone can usher in the era of Israel's bliss.

But more than all, let us soar with the apostle in his Ephesian letter, into the celestial realms and the spiritual blessings which are ours in Christ. On earth we have no rights – they belong to Israel. But in the heavens we attain the transcendent station reserved by grace for those alone who have descended into the depths.

We approach the Father Himself without the intervention of a priest. Do they look for Christ to come and reign over all the earth? We shall sit with Him on the throne of the universe!

After the church which is Christ's body has joined Him in the celestial regions Jehovah takes up His people Israel once again and for a thousand years he fills earth with blessing through their blessedness. Before that time He visits the earth with sore judgments and His people with untold trials.

Almost all of the errors which have wrought havoc in the church have been due to deflecting to Peter where we should have appealed to Paul.

Paul never saw our Lord until after His resurrection and glorification. He never makes the earthly life of our Lord the pattern for the believer. We are not only risen but ascended. We are concerned with the celestial, not the terrestrial.

Not so with Peter. He walked with His Lord and followed in His steps while He was still in His humiliation. It is the same with John.

Paul comes to a crisis when he no longer knew Christ "after the flesh." [2 Corinthians 5:16]

The two grand spheres of God's operations are presented to us at the very threshold of revelation. "In the beginning God created the *heavens* and the *earth*."

Excepting Paul's epistles, the entire scope of the Scriptures is occupied with His purposes regarding the *earth*, and more especially with the channel through which He will bring it about – the nation of Israel. Paul's letters deal with the *heavens*, and more particularly with the channel through which God purposes to bring His blessings to the celestial sphere – the church which is Christ's body.

To whom were Peter's and John's and James' letters written? We know that they were of the Circumcision, that Peter and John were the pillars to whom the gospel of the Circumcision was committed, yet we ought to be able to gather from the address on their letters for whom they were intended. [And we can by examining each of the Circumcision letters, noting they are addressed specifically to the believers within Israel.]

Having so rich a treasure ourselves we do not feel the need of filching theirs [Israel] from them. We rejoice in the manifestation of His mercy in the mission of Christ even though we are constrained to acknowledge that He was a Minister of the Circumcision for the truth of God (Romans 15:8).

We marvel at the forbearance shown in lingering over the apostate nation [Israel] which had rejected and crucified their Messiah and which seals its doom by despising the repeated message of pardon as recorded in the book of Acts.

We recognize that the epistle to the Hebrews fits the need of the faithful who did not apostatize in that day. We know that they will yet be grafted back into their own olive tree and received back into favor (Romans 11:12,24), and that, after we are gathered together unto Him, *they* will need the help and comfort which James (who writes to the twelve tribes) and Peter (who writes to the dispersion)

and John and Jude are especially adapted to give them. "Apply" these epistles today and they are a misfit. In that day they will be an imperative necessity, and we wonder at the wisdom with which they are written.

That the great bulk of revelation is concerned with the nation of Israel is true not only of the Hebrew Scriptures but of the Greek as well. Not that it is concerned with them alone and the other nations not at all, but that they receive the first and foremost place and the rest a secondary and subordinate one. "Jesus Christ was a Minister of the Circumcision, for the truth of God to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and that the nations might glorify God for His mercy ... with His people." (Romans 15:8-10)

The twelve apostles continued this ministry, and Peter, James, and John are expressly said to confine themselves to the Circumcision.

Let us remember, however, that the term "Circumcision" includes proselytes such as Cornelius (Acts 10:1-48), who, in order to share Israel's blessings, submitted to this fleshly rite.

Paul alone wrote for the Uncircumcision.

The Kingdom is proclaimed by the Messiah and they crucify Him. In mercy it is again proclaimed by His apostles in the book of Acts, only to be once more rejected.

Those individuals in the nation [Israel] who believed the proclamation of the kingdom are exhorted to patient continuance in faith in view of its postponement in the book of Hebrews. Their trials in the past as well as the trials which await His earthly people when the Kingdom is set up in power in the day of the Lord are made the basis of the epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude.

The Revelation or Unveiling of Jesus Christ is the crowning prophecy of the Circumcision series, and details the conflict of Israel with the nations and the realization of all the prophecies and promises of the Hebrew scriptures.

The good news or evangel contained in the records of our Lord's earthly ministry is strictly confined to the Kingdom foretold by the prophets. Christ was not sent to the nations but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 15:24). He warned the twelve when He sent them forth, not to go to the Samaritans. He Himself never went outside the boundaries of the land until after His resurrection and ascension.

Ephesians – and Paul's other writings

All of Paul's epistles are involved in the Ephesian epistle. The accompanying prison epistles, Philippians and Colossians, are not revelations of fresh truth, but corrective commentaries based upon Ephesian truth.

The other epistles are included in and modified by its teaching. The Promise Epistles, written to the Thessalonians, are distinctly included in present truth by the reference to those who have a prior expectation (Ephesians 1:12), the one expectation (4:4) and the helmet of the hope of salvation (6:17).

The Preparatory Epistles – Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians, are included by the fact that we have become joint participants of the evangel which Paul had preached (8:6), which is fully expounded in this group of epistles. The reference to righteousness (6:14) and the evangel of peace (6:15) are pointed references to Paul's previous ministry.

Thus we may take all of Paul's writings as our present guide, with due deference to the transcendent and ruling revelations in Paul's epistle to the Ephesians.

Injunctions to Timothy

The letters to Timothy and Titus, and especially 2 Timothy, blaze a path through the perplexities of the great apostasy. Timothy and Titus, in their individual responsibility as servants of God, received the very instructions His servants need today, however they remain unheeded.

The first injunction in second Timothy is of principal importance today. "Have a pattern of sound words, which you hear from me ..." (2 Timothy 1:13) So prevalent is the use of unscriptural words, and so loose are the translations of Paul's words, that it is a marvel that the Bible is supposed to buttress the babel which pretends to the dignity of "Christian doctrine." [For example] Paul taught justification and conciliation and reconciliation, but never atonement, which falls so far below the conception of God's grace that he never so much as mentions it. "Have a pattern of sound words, which you hear from me."

The corresponding injunction, "Proclaim the word, stand by it" (2 Timothy 4:2) is nearly as vital. After having the proper words it is necessary to proclaim them, and not the multitudinous substitutes which today have supplanted the preaching of the Scriptures.

But even if we have the proper expressions and proclaim the Scriptures, there is yet one other injunction which is vital to the truth. Without it there is confusion and error in its most subtle and destructive form. Without it the Scriptures themselves become the exponent and champion of error. With it they are clear and unconfused, upholding the truth. Paul exhorts Timothy to present himself an unashamed worker, "**correctly partitioning the word of truth**" (2 Timothy 2:15).

An example follows which leaves us in no doubt as to its meaning. Some said the resurrection had already occurred. They *misplaced* the truth. They did not deny it, or corrupt it. They put it in the past, when it was still future. Thus it is with the great bulk of Scripture today. It is *misplaced*. That which is truth at one time is destructive error at another. So, today, many things in the Bible are vehemently maintained in all good conscience, when a correct apportionment of truth would leave them for another time.

Summary

Eliminate Paul's epistles from the Greek scriptures and we have a complete complement of the Hebrew revelation. All the predictions of the prophets concerning the suffering and glories of Messiah and His people are fulfilled. It is all as much for the Circumcision as ever. The promised blessing of the nations *through* Israel sees its accomplishment.

But Paul's epistles set forth that secret grace which was unrevealed, and comes notwithstanding Israel's *failure*, rather than through their salvation.

All is concerned with the Circumcision except Paul's epistles. Paul alone gives us present truth. All truth is profitable in that it teaches us the ways of God. But only that truth is *applicable* which was written for the present economy.

A.E. Knoch. *From "The Sacred Scrolls of the Scriptures."*

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Excerpts selected by Bob Evely (2024)