

Matthew

1:6. The parenthesis is the figure of speech *epitrechon*, a form of parenthesis where the statement is not itself a complete thought (Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*).

1:16. “father.” The Greek is *aner*, and means, “an adult human male.” It is generally taken to be “husband” in this verse, but the context, the list of the three sets of 14 generations that go from Abraham to Christ, makes this impossible. If Joseph is the husband of Mary, there would only be 13 generations in the last list of 14. Also, the Aramaic text reads differently in this verse than it does in verse 19, where Joseph is clearly referred to as the “husband” of Mary. The difference in the wording indicates the difference in the relation. It would not be unusual for Mary to have a father named Joseph and a husband named Joseph. The fourteen generations after the exile to Babylon were: 1) Shealtiel, 2) Zerubbabel, 3) Abiud, 4) Eliakim, 5) Azor, 6) Zadok, 7) Akim, 8) Eliud, 9) Eleazar, 10) Mattan, 11) Jacob, 12) Joseph (the father of Mary), 13) Mary, 14) Jesus. If Joseph (number 12) was the husband of Mary, then many problems are created. There would not be 14 generations, but 13. Joseph’s father would be Jacob, but Luke 3:23 says Jacob was the son of Heli. Joseph would have two genealogies in the Gospels, one in Luke and one in Matthew, which contradict, and Mary would have no genealogy. It is clear that Matthew is Mary’s royal genealogy, and she is included in it as the 13th person, and mother of Jesus.

“Mary.” The first time her name occurs in the NT. Here she is said to be of royal birth, and her father’s (and thus her) line is traced from none other than King David himself. Yet there is another, unspoken truth that needs to be weighed. Her “relative” was Elizabeth, who was a daughter of Aaron, the Priest (Luke 1:5). Elizabeth had to be related to Mary through Mary’s mother, who may have even been the sister of Elizabeth’s father (Edersheim, *Life and Times*, book II, p. 149). Thus, in Mary we see the meeting of the King and the Priest, Jesus himself being the ultimate fulfillment of those offices.

1:18. “birth.” The Greek noun is *genēsis* (#1078 γένησις; pronounced ghen'-nay-sis), and strictly speaking it means “origin, source, or beginning” (Liddell and Scott Greek-English Lexicon). It is from the verb, *ginomai* (#1096 γίνομαι; pronounced ghin'-o-my), which means to become, to come into existence, begin to be. We get our English word “genesis” from *genēsis*. *Genēsis* also became used for that which flows from what is begun, hence it was used to express the concept of “nature,” or “natural” (cp. James 1:23; 3:6). Since we usually think of the birth of a person as his or her “beginning,” *gennēsis* was used by the Greeks of birth. However, there is a much more accurate Greek verb for “birth,” and that is *gennaō* (#1080 γεννάω; pronounced ghen-nah'-o), and the nouns associated with it are *gennētos* (#1084 γεννητός; pronounced ghen-nay-tos', meaning “born”) and *gennēsis* (#1083 γέννησις; pronounced ghen'-nay-sis; meaning, “a birth”). The two words, *genēsis* and *gennēsis*, are very similar, in fact, only one “n” is different. This has led to some confusion in Matthew 1:18, because some Greek texts read *genēsis*, while some read *gennēsis*.

Textual scholars have concluded that the most original reading of the Greek text of Matthew 1:18 is *genēsis*, meaning, origin or birth. Bruce Metzger writes: “Both *ge,nesij* [*genēsis*] and *γέννησις* [*gennēsis*] mean “birth,” but the former also means “creation,” “generation,” and “genealogy” (compare 1.1), whereas the latter means more strictly “engendering”.... In the present passage not only do the earlier representatives of

several text-types support γενεσις [*genēsis*], but the tendency of copyists would have been to substitute a word of more specialized meaning for one that had been used in a different sense in ver. 1, particularly since γεννησις [*gennēsis*] corresponds more nearly with the verb γεννᾶν [*gennan*] used so frequently in the previous genealogy.” (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*).

Although the substitution of *gennēsis* for *genēsis* in some Greek texts (which led to *gennēsis* being the Greek word in the text from which the King James Version was translated) may have been completely accidental, it might also have been purposeful. Trinitarian scribes may have been uncomfortable with the idea that Jesus’ “origin” was when God impregnated Mary, and so might have substituted what was to them a much clearer word, *gennēsis*, which would then clearly make only Jesus’ birth, not his real “beginning,” be the subject of Matthew 1:18. The word *genēsis* points to the fact that God impregnating Mary not only led to Jesus’ birth, but was in fact his “origin” or “beginning” in the flesh. He had been in the mind of God from before the foundation of the world, but did not exist except as part of God’s plan. When God impregnated Mary, Jesus “began” in reality, not just in the mind of God.

“of the Holy Spirit” is the genitive of origin. Mary was impregnated “by” or “from” God. “the Holy Spirit” is the name for God that emphasizes His power in operation. God is called “the Holy Spirit” in a number of verses in the NT, including Matthew 1:20; 12:32; Hebrews 9:8; Jesus is called “the Son of God” in many places, but Mary was impregnated by God’s active power, as per this verse and Luke 1:35. “of the Holy Spirit” is the genitive of origin. Mary was impregnated “by” or “from” God.

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1:19. “husband.” The Greek word is *aner* (#435 ἀνὴρ), and generally refers to a an adult male. It can refer to a man in contrast to a woman (Acts 5:1; 8:12); a man in his role as a husband (Mark 10:12; Luke 2:36; Acts 5:9; thus sometimes the translation “husband” is acceptable); and a man in contrast to a boy (1 Cor. 13:11). Sometimes it was used universally when both men and women present, “men” being inclusive of men and women because men were more visible in the culture and women were sheltered (Luke 11:31; James 1:20). Similarly, “man” was used in a way equivalent to “someone” or “a person” even if there was no specific need to refer to the sex of the person (Luke 9:38; John 1:30; Rom. 4:8). Matthew 1:19 is a case where culturally “man” (or “husband”) is used because in the conservative Eastern biblical culture to which Joseph and Mary belonged, a betrothal (engagement) was as strong as the marriage, so strong, in fact, that it had to be dissolved by divorce, as this verse makes clear. Thus, in the eyes of the people, Joseph was the “husband” of Mary, even though the two had not yet been through the marriage ceremony. This verse is a case where trying to translate *aner* as “fiancée” or “betrothed” causes problems because then the reader is left wondering why a divorce was necessary to break the engagement. It is better to translate the Greek more literally and then learn the biblical culture, which promotes a better understanding of the entire Bible.

“and yet.” From Joseph’s point of view, his betrothed had unfaithfully slept with another man while still out of wedlock. He is now facing his legal options, out of his just nature desiring to fulfill the Law, and yet also desiring not to shame Mary. His options

would be to either institute a lawsuit against Mary or issue her a certificate of divorce, dismissing her quietly. According to the Law, if a husband finds his new wife has had premarital sex, she should be stoned (Deut. 22:20-21). Joseph does not seem to fear stoning for Mary, however, instead he wished to save her from “public disgrace.” The reason for this is that by this time, death by stoning could not be accomplished in court (cp. John 18:31: “It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death”). As Hendriksen explains: “This law had been modified by so many man-made restrictions that this possibility could be safely dismissed, [yet, instituting a lawsuit] would nevertheless have exposed Mary to public disgrace and scorn, the very thing which Joseph wanted by all means to avoid.” The only other option for Joseph is what is described in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. He could quietly issue her a certificate of divorce because he “found indecency” in her, and Mary could leave him and “become another man’s wife” (24:1, 2). Joseph wanted to allow her to go quietly and marry whom he presumed to be the man she had slept with. This would preserve her from public disgrace and, technically, fulfill the righteousness of the law prescribed in Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

1:20. “the Holy Spirit” is the name for God that emphasizes His power in operation. See note on Matthew 1:18.

“favorably accept.” At this point Joseph would naturally have presumed his wife had been unfaithful. Since Joseph was “just” (v. 19), he would be obligated to put her away and not take her to himself after she had been “defiled” (Deut. 24:4; see entry on “and yet” Matt. 1:19). In this context the angel appears and tells Joseph not to fear to *paralambano* (#3880 παραλαμβάνω) his wife. This word is usually translated “take” or “receive,” but can also have the meaning of *accept favorably*: “Sometimes the emphasis lies not so much on receiving or taking over, as on the fact that the word implies agreement or approval, *accept*” (BDAG). Hence, the angel is assuring Joseph that he may accept his wife, not fearing any defilement. Additionally, the word would come with the strong connotation of “taking to one’s self” or receiving Mary into his house (as in v. 24).

1:21. “Jesus.” The angel would have spoken to Mary in Aramaic, and thus would have said the Aramaic name of Jesus, “*Yehoshua*,” which means “Yahweh is salvation.” Thus the angel explains by saying, “for, he will save his people from their sins.”

1:23. Quoted from Isaiah 7:14. Immanuel can easily be translated, “God is with us” which is less likely to be understood with a Trinitarian slant than just “God with us.”

The parenthesis is the figure of speech *epitrechon*, a form of parenthesis where the statement is not itself a complete thought (Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*).

1:24. “took to himself.” The word is *paralambano* (#3880 παραλαμβάνω), here the emphasis is on Joseph *receiving* Mary into his home, *taking* her as his wife. However, see also the entry on “favorably accept” in Matthew 1:20.

2:1. “arrived.” Using this particular word and employing it in the aorist tense emphasizes the arrival of the Magi. If the text were going to emphasize the *travel* it would have used the word for “came” in the imperfect tense. But here we have the word *paraginomai* (#3854 παραγίνομαι) in the aorist, the word for an arrival or making a public appearance (BDAG). Holman captures the sense of the emphasis and translates it “arrived unexpectedly,” which makes the point perhaps too strongly. The translation “arrived” is best.

“of Judea.” The ancient tribal territories of the twelve tribes had given way to the kingdom of Herod, and other kingdoms before that. Nevertheless, Bethlehem was in the

tribal territory of Judea, and thus the prophecy that Christ would be from the tribe of Judah was important to emphasize.

2:2. “pay him homage.” The Greek is *proskuneō* (#4352 προσκυνέω; from *kuneo*, κυνέω ‘to kiss’). The word *proskuneo* is frequently used to designate the custom of prostrating oneself before a person or persons and kissing their feet or the hem of their garment, the ground, etc.; the Persians did this in the presence of their deified king, and the Greeks before a divinity or something holy. It is to express in attitude or gesture one’s complete dependence on or submission to an authority figure, (fall down and) worship, do obeisance to, prostrate oneself before, do reverence to, welcome respectfully (BDAG). It is used very often in the Septuagint for *הִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה* (to prostrate oneself). Properly, it means to kiss the hand to (toward) one, in token of reverence. Hence, among the Orientals, especially the Persians, to fall upon the knees and touch the ground with the forehead as an expression of profound reverence (“to make a ‘salam.’”). The Latin is *veneror* (cp. our “venerate”) and *adoro* (“adore”); hence, in the N. T. by kneeling or prostration to do homage (to one) or make obeisance, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication. It is used of homage shown to men of superior rank (Thayer).

In 1611, when the KJV was being written, the English word “worship” was used of the worship of deity, but it was also used of bowing down before men of higher rank, which was an expected act of respect and deference at that time. Kings and nobles expected people to bow before them. This was also true of NT society, which was very hierarchical. Thus, it was expected at the time of Jesus, and in the 1600’s that someone would bow down or prostrate themselves before a superior, especially someone such as a king. This form of prostration is still seen among the Moslems when they pray, prostrating themselves before Allah. The act of prostrating oneself before a king or dignitary then led to them being designated as “Your Worship.” Thus, in 1611, translating *proskuneo* as “worship” worked very well and was not confusing, however, in the four centuries since the KJV, we stopped bowing and prostrating ourselves (worshipping) those of higher rank, so it is confusing to us today.

Today we restrict the use of the word “worship” to God, except in a few instances, especially when we use it in a hyperbolic and idiomatic sense, such as “He worships that new car,” or, “She worships the ground he walks on.” Even then, it is used as a term of extravagant respect. In fact, the idea of worship as deeply bowing or falling in prostration before a person of higher status has completely left modern English vocabulary (as per Merriam-Webster’s 11th edition Collegiate Dictionary). Thus, while it was appropriate to translate *proskuneo* as “worship” in 1611, if we today translate *proskuneo* as “worship,” it often makes the verse take on a meaning that is not in the Greek text at all. For example, the Magi did not think of Jesus as God, and did not “worship” him as they would a deity. Rather, they did him homage as they would a king. That is not to say that some uses of *proskuneo* in the NT should not be translated “worship.” For example, the Devil asked Jesus to fall down and “worship” him. The Devil wanted the same worship as God, so “worship” is a good translation there.

2:4. “high priests.” In Old Testament times the High Priest served for life. However, that custom had been changed for political reasons, such that at the time of Herod (and at the time of Christ’s crucifixion) there was more than one High Priest. Furthermore, it seems that members of the High Priest’s family also could be called a high priest (See Lenski).

2:6. Quoted from Micah 5:2.

Some translations read “Bethlehem, in the land of Judah” (e.g., ESV, NIV) and some read, “Bethlehem, land of Judah” (e.g., ASV, NASB). The Greek word for “land,” *ge* (#1093 γῆ), has the same form for the dative (“in the land”) and vocative (“O land” [direct address]) cases. The dative, “Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,” is correct; for “Bethlehem, land of Judah” does not make sense.

2:7. The word “exactly” is carried in the verb “learned.”

“the chronology of the appearing of the star.” Herod wanted to know the timing of the star, in order to ascertain how old the child must be (cp. verse 16). In this verse we find evidence for the view that the star was a prolonged astronomical event(s), rather than a one-time past appearance seen in the east, then miraculously appearing again to lead the Magi in 2:9. The text uses the word *chronos* (#5550 χρόνος) to describe the timing of the star. This word refers to “an indefinite period of time during which some activity or event takes place, *time, period of time*” (BDAG). Literally, the verse reads, Herod “determined from them the period of time of the appearing star.” *Appearing* is in the present tense, indicating a continual action; the star was “continuously shining” (*phaino* [#5316 φαίνω]) over an indefinite period of time. Hence, the way most translations go, “the time the star had appeared,” captures the sense of what Herod wanted to know (when the star first appeared), but unfortunately misses the fact that the star appeared over a period of time, and was still appearing when Herod spoke to the Magi.

2:8. “as soon as.” Cp. NIV translation. The word *epan* (#1875 ἐπὶ) can mean “when” or “as soon as,” (BDAG). Herod’s eagerness to get rid of the competition to his throne makes us favor “as soon as.”

“pay homage.” See note on Matt. 2:2.

2:10. “rejoiced with great joy.” This is the figure of speech polyptoton, the repetition of the same word, appearing in different parts of speech. Here it is “joy” in both verb and noun forms, emphasizing the great joy of the Magi (Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*).

2:11. “paid homage.” See note on Matt. 2:2.

2:12. “divinely instructed.” Cp. Darby’s translation. This is a fascinating word—*chrematizo* (#5537 χρηματίζω). Its basic meaning is “to make known a divine revelation from God” (Louw-Nida). The word is usually translated “warn,” yet its full meaning is much richer than this. We have translated the term “divine instruction,” in accordance with the TDNT: “In the NT the verb denotes divine instruction by revelation.” Outside the New Testament it is used as a response of those seeking an oracle—it therefore designates *the response given one who seeks a divine answer*. Thayer defines the word: “to give a response to those consulting an oracle... to give a divine command or admonition, to teach from heaven.” Likewise Bullinger writes in his lexicon, “spoken of a divine response, to give response, to speak as an oracle, speak or warn from God.” The only example of the noun form in the New Testament follows this definition. In Romans 11:2-4, Elijah makes intercession to God about Israel (Rom. 11:2) and God gives back a “divine answer” (Rom. 11:4); it is not meant as a warning, but an answer from God to Elijah’s appeal.

The word is used nine times in scripture: four times to indicate the divine instruction given in response to an implied seeking of God (Matt. 2:12; 2:22; Luke 2:26; Acts 10:22), three times to indicate the message from God with emphasis on *warning* (Heb. 8:5; 11:7; 12:25), and twice it is used in its second definition, “to be called, designated as” (Acts 11:26; Rom. 7:3).

When applied here in Matthew 2:12, this word shows the Magi would have asked God what to do and were instructed to leave home by another route. These men were godly and smart. They did not need to be “warned” that Herod was corrupt and evil, it was well known. The absurdity of Herod’s claim would have been very apparent to them—Herod, the man paranoid enough to kill his own son, desiring to prostrate himself before a would-be usurper of his throne? No, they had no need of warnings; what they lacked was divine instruction as to what to do about their situation—this would have prompted the Magi to seek advice from God. Concerning this verse Meier writes in his commentary, “the question that preceded [the dream] is presupposed” (Meyer’s Commentary on the New Testament; Matt. p. 63). Similarly, Vincent writes, “The verb means *to give a response to one who asks or consults*... [it] therefore implies that the wise men had sought counsel of God” (*Word Studies*, p. 21).

This same reasoning can be applied in Matthew 2:22. Joseph already heard of Archelaus and was afraid to go to Judea, so to translate the verb “he was warned” seems superfluous. Rather, Joseph—along with the Magi (2:12), Simeon (2:26), and Cornelius (Acts 10:22)—were spiritually discerning, seeking council from God, and thus were *divinely instructed* in what path to take.

2:13, 14, 15. “get up... take the child and his mother... stay.” These exact words are used to describe what Joseph did in response to the command from the angel of the Lord. The angel says “get up,” so Joseph “got up;” the angel says, “take the child and his mother,” so Joseph “took the child and his mother;” the angel says “stay there until,” so Joseph “stays there until.” This parallelism highlights Joseph’s obedience to the word of the Lord, by describing what Joseph did with the same words the angel used in his command. The same parallelism occurs in verses 20 and 21.

“stay.” For the word *stay*, the angel uses the verb “to be,” *eimi* (#1510 εἶμι), with the sense of “remain” or “stay;” Joseph is told to “be there” in Egypt until the angel tells him differently. Then in verse 15 we are told that Joseph “was there”—using the same verb and word for “there.”

2:14. “During *the night*” (see Douglas *Interlinear* and NIV).

2:15. Quoted from Hosea 11:1.

“stayed there.” See entry on “stay” in Matt. 2:13.

“resulting in... what was spoken being fulfilled.” In English there are several ways to communicate purpose or intention, just as there are several ways to indicate the results of an action. We might say, “I read the Bible to grow closer to God,” showing our intention of growing closer to God by reading scripture. To point to results we might use a participle, “he tripped, falling into the mud.” There are also several ways Greek grammar accomplishes this, and one such way is with the particle *hina* (#2443 ἵνα) occurring in conjunction with a verb in the subjunctive mood. When *hina*, usually translated, “that,” “so that,” or “in order that,” is used with a verb in the subjunctive mood, it can express either purpose, result, or purpose and result simultaneously. Furthermore, *hina* with a verb in the subjunctive mood can be used in command clauses (as well as substantival, epexegetical, and complementary clauses, which we will not cover here [Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, p. 471]).

The construction is the same in the Greek for all these kinds of clauses, so it is up to the translator/interpreter to discover the meaning of the phrase. The context and scope of scripture must be the guide. In what follows we will give examples showing how *hina*

with a verb in the subjunctive mood can form a purpose clause, result clause, or purpose-result clause. After some discussion we will also consider command clauses.

These first three clauses all consist of a main verb, the particle *hina*, and a verb in the subjunctive. The explanations have the main verb underlined, the *hina translation* in italics, and the **subjunctive verb** in bold.

(1) A *purpose clause* expresses the *intention* of the main verb, so in these cases *hina* should be translated *in order that, with the purpose that*.

- (Matt. 19:13). “Then little children were being brought to him *in order that* **he might lay** his hands on them and pray....” The children were brought (main verb) with *the purpose that (hina)* Jesus **might lay** (subjunctive verb) his hands on them and pray.
- (Luke 9:12). “Send the multitude away, *in order that* **they may** go into the villages and surrounding countryside, and **lodge** and **get provisions**.” The apostles plead with Jesus to send the people away for the purpose of finding lodging and getting provisions. (Here the verbs in the subjunctive mood are “lodge” and “get provisions,” not “go”
- (Rom. 1:11). “I long to see you, *in order that* **I may impart** to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you.” Paul is expressing his purpose for seeing the Romans; he purposed to impart to them a spiritual gift of strengthening.
- More purpose clauses are:

(2) A *result clause* expresses the resulting consequences of the main verb when the result is *not intended* to be the consequence of the main verb. In other words, this expresses when a person does something, or an event incurs, resulting in consequences that were not intended. The *hina* should be translated *so that; with the result that*.

- (John 9:2). “And his disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, *with the result that* **he was born blind?**’” The disciples assumed someone’s sin unintentionally resulted in this man’s blindness (cp. NET translation: “Rabbi, who committed the sin that caused him to be born blind?”).
- (Rom. 5:20). “The law came in *with the result that* the trespass **increased**.” God did not introduce the law with the intention of increasing sin. Nevertheless, this was the result of the law.
- (Gal. 5:17). “For [the spirit and the flesh] are opposed to each other, *with the result that* **you are not doing** what **you want**.” It is not the spirit’s intention in opposing the flesh to prohibit you from doing what you want, but is simply the result of the internal battle between our spirit and flesh.
- More result clauses are:

(3) A *Purpose-result clause* expresses that the subjunctive verb is both the *intention* and *result* of the main verb. The *hina* should be translated, *so that*.

- (John 3:16). “He gave his only begotten Son, *so that* everyone who believes in him **will not perish** but **have** eternal life.” God gave his Son with the *intention* of saving believers from perishing and having eternal life; simultaneously, the giving of the son *resulted in* those who believe not perishing and having eternal life.
- (Rom. 3:19, ESV). “Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, *so that* every mouth **may be stopped**, and the whole world **may be held accountable** to God.” The *hina* + subjunctive clause shows us that the law speaks with the purpose of stopping every mouth and making the world accountable to God; and furthermore, when it speaks, it results in this purpose being accomplished.
- (Matt. 1:22-23, NET). “This all happened *so that* what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet **would be fulfilled**: ‘Look! The virgin will conceive and bear a son....’” God’s bringing about the virgin birth intentionally resulted in the fulfillment of what was spoken by the prophet.
- More purpose-result clauses are:

In the REV we have attempted to remain as consistent as possible in the translation of the *hina* in these clauses. For purpose clauses we say, “in order that”; for result clauses, “with the result that”; and for purpose-result clauses, “so that.” The English translation “in order that” clearly indicates purpose; likewise, for result clauses, what could be more clear than, “with the result that?” “So that,” on the other hand is the best translation for a purpose-result clause precisely because it is ambiguous; it can be read to indicate either purpose or result. For example, the phrase, “he fell back into the snow so that an imprint was left,” could be read to mean he fell “so that” (purpose) he could make an imprint of himself, or it could be read to mean he just happened to fall “so that” (result) an imprint was left on the ground. The context would have to determine whether the “so that” speaks of purpose, result, or purpose result. When we felt the biblical context demands a purpose-result clause we have rendered the *hina* “so that.”

That having been said, when reading the REV one must be careful not to assume every instance of “so that,” “in order that,” or “with the result that” is a *hina* + subjunctive clause. For there are also uses of *hina* by itself that warrant the “so that” translation; likewise there are several other ways Greek can indicate purpose, hence, “in order that” could be due to another of these forms. The same can be said of the phrase, “with the result that,” which is often just a translation of *eis* (#1519 εἰς) or *hoste* (#5620 ὥστε) (Dana and Mantey, *Grammar*, pp.282-86). The reader must consult the Greek text, or the commentary to ensure the translation represents the *hina* + subjunctive construction.

Identifying these clauses correctly is of fundamental importance for properly understanding and translating the Bible. Thankfully, in a majority of instances the type of clause is abundantly clear from the context or the scope of scripture. Nevertheless, the danger of misidentification is always present, because the Greek form of each construction is precisely the same. This means that in the *hina* + subjunctive form, a purpose, result, and purpose-result clause looks exactly the same in the Greek. If one calls a “purpose” or “purpose-result clause” what is actually a result clause, he attributes intention when God only meant to speak of what resulted, not what was purposed to

happen. On the other hand, if one categorizes a passage as a “result clause,” when it is really a purpose clause, then he has missed the intention that is underlying the action.

For example, the first part of Romans 5:20 is often translated as though it were a purpose clause: “The Law came in so that the transgression would increase” (NASB). This translation ascribes the intention of increasing man’s transgression to the introduction of the law. But surely this is misguided. God introduced the law for the purpose of increasing sin? Why would God *want* sin to increase? This seems to go against Galatians 3:19-24 which indicates that the law came in precisely because there were transgressions (See also Rom. 3:19-20). Hence, this verse seems much better suited as a result clause: “But law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied” (NRSV).

1 John 2:19 is another example of how confusion can be created by translating a result clause as though purpose were intended. Speaking of the exodus of false believers from the Church, versions such as the HCSB and NASB translate the verse, “They went out so that it might be made clear that none of them belongs to us.” It seems clear that false believers did not leave the Christian fellowship “so that” it would be clear they were not true to the faith. In contrast, seeing the *hina* clause as a result clause makes sense of the passage: “Their going showed that none of them belonged to us” (NIV).

Lastly, we must also consider how *hina* with the subjunctive can form a command clause. It is vital to properly distinguish purpose clauses from command clauses. A purpose clause indicates *why* something happened, it shows the intention behind the action: e.g., “Children were being brought to him in order that he might lay [Greek=*hina*+subjunctive] his hands on them and pray” (Matt. 19:13). A command clause, on the other hand, *issues an order* or command: e.g., “Come and lay [Greek=*hina*+subjunctive] your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live” (Mark 5:23).

Because it is the same Greek form of *hina* with the subjunctive, there can sometimes be disagreement as to whether purpose or command is meant. This disagreement shows up in the varying translations of Mark 5:12 for instance, when the demons plead to go into the herd of swine. Some versions translate the second part of their plea as purpose, “Send us into the pigs *so that* we may enter them” (cp. NASB; HCSB; KJV; ASV), while most modern versions translate it as a command: “Send us into the pigs. *Let us* enter them” (cp. ESV; NIV; NRSV; NET; NAB; NJB). Interestingly, we see precisely the same split between the translations with regard to Titus 3:13, “see that they lack nothing” (command: ESV; NIV; NRSV; NET; NAB; NJB) as opposed to “so that they lack nothing (purpose-result: NASB; HCSB; KJV; ASV). (See also Revelation 14:13 for similar disagreement between translations).

Understanding how the *hina* construction can indicate a command becomes important for passages such as John 9:3, about the man born blind. Because this verse has *hina* with the subjunctive, we must ask whether it is meant to be a purpose or command clause. It is rendered as a purpose clause in most translations, “He was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him” (NRSV); however, this translation has serious consequences to the meaning of the text. It means that the man’s blindness was intentional, so that he could not see for the better part of his life, simply for the purpose of being healed this day—that “God’s works” may be manifest by his healing. Such an interpretation goes against the teaching of scripture, that God is love (1 John 4:16), has plans not to harm us (Jer. 29:11), and that it is Satan who is our enemy, the god of this

world (2 Cor. 4:4) who has the power of death (Heb. 2:14). Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8), his ministry was to heal those oppressed by the Satan (Acts 10:38). The Gospels nowhere portray this warfare mindset of Jesus as going about healing those *oppressed by God* (See Boyd, *God at War*, pp. 231-34).

Accordingly, a number of scholars agree that John 9:3 should be read as a command clause, “But let the works of God be revealed in him.”¹ In this way, the Greek is understood just like Ephesians 5:33, which has the same construction: “let [Gk=*hina*+subjunctive] the wife see that she respects her husband.”

See commentary on John 9:3 and 13:18 for more on *hina* + subjunctive command clauses wrongly identified as purpose clauses.

2:16. “Made a fool of.” From *empaizo* (#1702 ἐμπαίζω), “To trick someone so as to make a fool of the person” (BDAG); Lenski. It was more than just being “tricked” by the Magi. Herod reigned by fear and control, so having someone disobey a direct command, from his perspective, was to make a mockery of his reign. He would have expected the Magi back the next day, two at the most. He felt they made a fool of him by slipping away, and was furious.

“killed.” This was standard operating procedure for Herod. His reign was so filled with violent acts that this particular killing is not even noticed in the secular histories.

2:18. Quoted from Jer. 31:15.

“a sound was heard in Ramah.” Most translations read, “a voice was heard.” However, the Greek word *phone* (#5456 φωνή) can be used to mean just a sound (e.g., John 3:8; 1 Cor. 14:7; Rev. 8:5; 8:13 [“blasts”]). Though the sound would have been coming from a human voice, it would have been the sound of sobbing.

“sobbing.” Traditionally, this has been translated “weeping.” But we do not feel that “weeping” best captures the sense of the Greek word *klauthmos* (#2805 κλαυθμός). In English, *weeping* conjures up pictures of a weak and quiet, teary sadness. *Klauthmos* is more of a loud crying with obvious physical manifestations: “not merely with tears, but with every outward expression of grief” (Bullinger, *Critical Lexicon*, p. 862). Hence, we have rendered the word here “sobbing,” which gives a better sense of physical wailing than does the term “weeping;” after all, these mother’s babies had just been murdered. This is the noun form of the verb *klaio* (#2799 κλαίω) translated as “crying” in this verse.

“crying.” We have translated the word *klaio* (#2799 κλαίω) as “crying” rather than “weeping.” This is the verb form of *klauthmos*; see note above on “sobbing.”

2:19. “after.” The phrase “after Herod died” is a Greek construction known as genitive absolute. Although there are no specific time words, a genitive absolute has a temporal sense, usually translated “while,” “when,” or “after.” Did the dream come “while,” “when,” or “after” Herod died? To say “after Herod died” is the most ambiguous translation (the dream could have come right after Herod died, or some time later). To say “while” or “when” would mean the dream occurred simultaneously with Herod’s death, which most likely would not have been the case. Political and social tension always accompanied regime change in ancient times; would there be a peaceful transfer of power, or a *coup d’état*? We have translated the genitive absolute with “after,” to allow

¹ Boyd, *God at War*, pp.231-34; Boyd also notes M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, trans. J. Smith (Rome: Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1963), pp. 141-42; C.F.D. Moule, *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 144-45; Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1965), p. 145ff.

for the possibility of some time elapsing for Archelaus—who had already begun reigning when Joseph arrived in Israel (v. 22)—to stabilize control and for things to settle down after the transfer of power.

“saying.” The verse division of the Nestle-Aland text includes this word at the beginning of verse 20. However, many translations put it here at the end of verse 19: NASB; NRSV; RSV; ASV. We felt the cleaner division was to include it in verse 19. **2:20-21.** For the significance of the parallelism between the angel’s command and Joseph’s response see note on Matthew 2:13 “get up... take the child and his mother... stay.”

2:22. “divinely instructed.” See entry on Matthew 2:12.

2:23. This phrase, “he will be called a Nazarene” is not meant to be a quotation of any scripture, for the saying is not found in any of the biblical writings. So what does Matthew mean here? There are two possibilities. First, these words could be a prophecy that was “spoken” (*rheo*, #4483 ῥέω), but not written. Unlike any other such reference in Matthew, this was said to be spoken by the “prophets” (plural), rather than by the “prophet.” The fact the noun is plural tells us Matthew did not intend this to be taken as a reference to a particular prophetic writing, but the words of the “prophets.” Hence, there were some things God told his prophets regarding the Messiah that were spoken and preserved in oral tradition but never inspired as holy writ—that the Messiah would be called a Nazarene was one such orally preserved prophecy. In this case it is the figure of speech *hysteresis*, when an author gives added information not known in the historical narrative (Cp. Bullinger, *Companion Bible*).

The other option for understanding this phrase—the path taken by Lenski and Hendriksen, for instance—is that the expression “he will be called a Nazarene” is meant as a summery statement of what the prophets spoke about the messiah, that he would be considered lowly and rejected. We recall the words of Nathanael, who showed typical distain for Nazarenes: “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46). In this case, Matthew combines the sense of several prophetic writings about the Messiah and describes them under his own heading, “He will be called a Nazarene.” But this view is unlikely. For why would Jesus have to literally move to Nazareth in order to fulfill this saying? If being called a Nazarene does not refer to actually living in Nazareth, then moving there would not fulfill the prophecy.

The Greek word *hopōs* (#3704 ὅπως), translated “in order to,” denotes purpose, showing that the physical move was intended to fulfill the word. If the phrase was meant as simply a derogative saying, “he’ll be called ‘a Nazarene,’” then there would be no need for the Messiah to literally live there. Therefore, the first interpretation is to be preferred.

3:3. Quoted from Isaiah 40:3.

3:7. The wrath about to come. This is the wrath associated with the Day of the Lord. John the Baptist did not know the Sacred Secret. The Messiah was on earth, so Armageddon would come soon (or so he thought).

3:8. “Come now.” See entry on Luke 3:8.

3:10. “is cut down.” See note on Luke 3:9.

3:11. “in holy spirit.” No articles in the Greek. This is the gift of holy spirit.

4:1. “led up.” The Greek is *anagō* (#321 ἀνάγω) and means, to lead or bring from a lower to a higher point; thus, lead up, bring up. This shows us conclusively that Jesus was led

into the desert of Judea immediately after his baptism in Matthew 3. The Jordan River is the low point in that area, and the Judean desert was above it to the west.

“desert.” The Greek is *eremos* (#2048 ἔρημος), and it means a solitary, lonely, desolate, uninhabited place, a desert, a wilderness, a lonely rejoin, or an uncultivated region fit for pasturage.

“tempted.” The Greek word *peirazō* (#3985 πειράζω) can mean several different things depending on its context. It is used for (1) tempting and (2) testing (i.e., trying, examining, proving); its semantic range also includes (3) “attempting to do something,” like when Paul and Timothy tried to go into Bithynia but were prevented (Acts 16:7); and (4) trying to “entrap through a process of inquiry,” such as the Pharisees testing Jesus with questions (BDAG). The differences in meaning are found not in the word itself, but in the circumstance and especially the motive behind the one who is tempting, testing, attempting, etc. The distinction between testing and tempting, then, is this: testing comes from a desire to see the person prove himself true, to pass the test, and to gain confidence from the victory; temptation, on the other hand, is when evil is placed before someone in hope that he or she will fail. Thus God never tempts people (Jam. 1:13) but he does test people (Gen. 22:1; Heb. 11:17). Both temptation and testing are meant to see what is in a person, whether they will obey, but temptation is meant to make someone fall while testing is to raise them up. God always tests in order to reward or bring about good (Deut. 8:16). Hence, Jeremiah 17:10 says, “I the LORD test the mind and search the heart, to give to all according to their ways, according to the fruit of their doings” (ESV).

“by the Slanderer.” The literal is “of the Slanderer,” a genitive of origin, the Slanderer being the source of the temptation.

4:4. Quoted from Deut. 8:3.

4:6. Quoted from Ps. 91:11, 12.

4:7. Quoted from Deut. 6:16.

4:8. “lofty.” The Greek adjective *hupselos* (#5308 ὑψηλός) has a basic meaning of “high” (as in Matt 17:1, Mk. 9:2, and Rev. 21:10). However, it can also have the connotation of “proud” or “arrogant.” We see this in Rom. 12:16 when we are told to “not mind high things” (μὴ τὰ ὑψηλὰ φρονοῦντες), i.e. not be proud. The LXX uses this sense in Isaiah 2:12-14: “the LORD of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty... against all the lofty mountains, and against all the uplifted hills.” It is possible that here in Matthew the adjective has this connotation implied; the devil tempted Christ to ‘mind high things’ by taking him to a ‘proud’ mountain, showing him all the splendor of ruling the kingdoms of the world. In English the word “lofty” captures both the sense of altitude and arrogance.

4:9. “worship.” The Devil wanted Jesus to reverence him as he revered God. Thus “worship” is appropriate here. See note on “pay homage” in Matthew 2:2.

4:10. Quoted from Deut. 6:13.

4:13. Jesus left Nazareth after the people there tried to kill him (Luke 4:28-31). He made Capernaum his home (see note on Mark 2:1).

4:15, 16. Quoted from Isaiah 9:1, 2. “The Road of the Sea,” often known by its more modern name, the Via Maris. The Via Maris is the ancient trade route linking Egypt with Syria, Anatolia (modern Turkey) and Mesopotamia. Its early name was “Way of the Philistines” (Ex. 13:17) because it ran along the coast of Israel through the territory of the Philistines. The name “Via Maris” is much later and based on the Latin Vulgate translation of Matt. 4:15. It means “the Way of the Sea,” or “the Road of the Sea.”

The Via Maris goes from Egypt across Sinai, through the Philistine Plain and the Plain of Sharon through the cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Joppa. At Dor it branches into two roads. One continues directly north along the Mediterranean coast, and the other follows an inland route by Megiddo, through the Jezreel Valley, then past the west side of the Sea of Galilee, passing through Tiberias, then continuing north through Migdal, Capernaum, and Hazor. From Hazor it crossed the Jordan River at Jacob's Ford then went over the Golan Heights to Damascus. The fact that the Via Maris passed by Capernaum helps explain why that city had a centurion and a tollhouse (Matt. 2:14) so revenue could be collected from the passing caravans. Also, it shows us that when Jesus Christ chose Capernaum to be his home town after he left Nazareth, he chose a cosmopolitan town where there would be plenty of opportunity to share the Word and reach others, as well as opportunity for others to more easily reach him.

4:17. “The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” Spoken by both John and Jesus. Neither knew about the Administration of the Sacred Secret. They did not know that the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven would be more than 2,000 years in the future.

4:18. “Sea of Galilee.” The so called “sea” of Galilee is only 7 miles across and 12 miles long, and the entire lake can be seen from the escarpments on both the east and west sides. The Greek word *thalasso*, lake, sea, or ocean, does not really refer to the size of the body of water, and thus has to be translated from the context. Because the body of water is called “the Sea of Galilee” we leave that when the proper name is mentioned. However, when it is not referred to by name, it is actually a lake, and that is how we refer to it.

5:3. “Poor in spirit.” This is the figure of speech “idiom,” and is an idiomatic way of saying “humble in their attitude.” To fully understand the idiom, we must examine both “poor” and “spirit.” The Greek word “poor” is *ptochos* (#4434 πτωχός), and it means poor in wealth, but can refer to being “poor” in other ways. For example, the people Christ addresses in Revelation 3:17 are technically wealthy in material goods, yet Jesus says: “You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.” In this verse, “poor” refers to being poor in godliness and in the treasure that will be bestowed at the Judgment. Similarly, the word “poor” can refer to being poor or humble in one’s attitude. This is reflected in Isaiah 66:2, which mentions the person to whom God will pay attention: “but to this *man* will I look, *even* to *him that is* poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” This verse mentions a “poor and contrite spirit” but many versions correctly understand that the word “poor” refers to “humble,” and translate it that way (ESV; HCSB; NASB, NIV, NRSV). Kenneth Bailey (*Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes* (IVP Academic, 2008, pp. 68, 69, 158, 159) does a good job in showing from the Old Testament, the Qumran texts, and even early Christian sources, that “poor” was used idiomatically for “humble.”

The word “spirit” is translated from the Greek word *pneuma* (#4151 πνεῦμα), which has many meanings, including “spirit” and “wind” (John 3:8). Furthermore, when *pneuma* is translated “spirit,” it can refer to many different things, including God (John 4:24); Jesus (2 Cor. 3:17); angels (Heb. 1:14); and demons (Matt. 10:1). It can also refer to “attitude,” which it does here. Other places it refers to attitude are Matthew 26:41 and Mark 14:38, when Peter and the other disciples were sleepy and Jesus told them, “The spirit [attitude] is willing, but the body is weak.” It is also “attitude” in Acts 18:25 when

Apollos was called, “fervent in the spirit” (KJV), meaning that he had a fervent attitude, which is why the NRSV translates the phrase, “he spoke with burning enthusiasm.” Interestingly, English also uses “spirit” as “attitude.” For example, we speak of a person being “in good spirits,” or a school having good “school spirit.”

The “spirit” in Matthew 5:3 cannot refer to the gift of holy spirit, because before the day of Pentecost, holy spirit was only upon a select few people, not upon the crowds Jesus was speaking to. Also, before the Day of Pentecost God gave His holy spirit to whom He wanted and in the measure He wanted, so there was no way anyone could have been “poor” in holy spirit. For more about the uses of *pneuma* (spirit) see, Graeser, Lynn, and Schoenheit, *The Gift of Holy Spirit: The Power to be like Christ*, Appendix B.

It is important for us to understand that Jesus opened the Sermon on the Mount by teaching that those who were humble in their attitude were blessed. Being humble is the door to God’s further blessings. 1 Peter 5:5 says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” When we are humble we hear the voice of God and obey it. When we are not humble we do not get the blessings God would have poured out to us. In the context of Matthew 5:5, which is the coming Kingdom of Heaven, those who are humble will obey God and thus receive everlasting life in the Kingdom, so they are blessed. References in the Old Testament that humble people would be blessed include Psalm 149:4; Isaiah 29:19; 66:2; and Zephaniah 3:12.

5:18. “not...will ever.” This phrase is constructed in the Greek by *ou me*, an intensified form of “no.” Literally, it is composed of two words for no, “no not.”

Matthew 5:18 is an interesting study in translation. The ESV says, “For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. But what is an “iota” and a “dot.” An “iota,” is the smallest letter in the Greek alphabet, and the “dot” is from the Greek *keraiia*, which means “little horn.” Of course, Jesus was speaking Hebrew or Aramaic to his audience, and the King James Version picked up on that and brought the Greek into Hebrew, using “jot,” which is more properly “yod,” the tenth and smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and tittle, which are the little horns or ornaments on nicely drawn letters in the Hebrew text. Most modern translators do not want to force their readers to know details of Greek or Hebrew, and so translate the phrase something such as, “not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen,” as the NIV does. The point of what Jesus was saying was that nothing would pass from the Law until all was fulfilled.

5:21. Quoted from Exod. 20:13.

5:22. “Raca.” An insult, probably meaning “empty” with the idea of “empty-head” or “blockhead.”

“Gehenna” is the Valley of Hinnom. *Gehenna* is the Greek word that comes from the Hebrew “*Ge*,” meaning “valley,” and “*Hinnom*,” which was apparently a man’s name, because in the Old Testament the valley is known both as the Valley of Hinnom (Neh. 11:30; some Hebrew texts of Josh. 15:8) and as the “valley of the sons of Hinnom” (Josh. 18:16; 2 Kings 23:10; Jer. 7:31). It seems that Hinnom’s descendents eventually took over and controlled the valley. The “*Ge Hinnom*,” the Valley of Hinnom, is first mentioned as part of the northern boundary of the tribal area assigned to Judah (Josh. 15:8). Thus, the “*Ge Hinnom*,” (“Valley of Hinnom”) was immediately south of the city of Jerusalem. This geographical point is very important because the history of the *Ge Hinnom* is closely tied to Jerusalem.

In Old Testament times, the Valley of Hinnom became associated with pagan sacrifice and even child sacrifice. For example, Ahaz, king of Judah, offered his children as human sacrifices there (2 Chron. 28: 1-3). The prophet Jeremiah spoke out against these evils, and foretold that the Valley of Hinnom would be so full of buried bones that there would finally be no more room to bury anyone else (Jer. 7:31, 32). Although Jeremiah spoke of dead bodies and ashes being thrown there, he also mentioned that it would one day be clean, which will happen in the Millennial Reign of Christ (Jer. 31:40). The bones made the whole area a place to avoid, because if an Israelite touched a human bone, that person would be unclean for seven days (Num. 19:16). This could be a serious hindrance to worship, especially if someone came a long way to Jerusalem to worship but then became unclean and unable to worship for seven days because he or she accidentally touched a bone on the way into the city.

Because it was unclean, the Valley of Hinnom came to be used as the garbage dump by the people of Jerusalem. Of course this was very handy because, as anyone who has to take out the garbage knows, it is always nice if you can carry it downhill and not too far. The inhabitants of Jerusalem would just carry their garbage, including dead animals, bones and other waste, outside the south gate of the city (still to this day called “the dung gate”), down the hill and into the “Valley of Hinnom,” into *Ge Hinnom*. The waste that was dumped there was then either burned up in the fires that usually burned there, or it rotted away, being eaten by maggots and worms. The fire and maggots that continually consumed the garbage in the Valley of Hinnom is the reason Scripture says that after the Judgment, the fire will not be quenched, nor the worm die (Isa. 66:24; Mark 9:48). By the time of Christ, the Valley of Hinnom had been used for centuries by the inhabitants of Jerusalem as their local garbage dump.

When the Hebrew words, “*Ge Hinnom*” were translated into Greek in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the “*Ge Hinnom*” became the “*pharagx Hennom*,” because “*pharagx*” is the Greek word for “valley.” Then, by the time the New Testament was written, the Greek name for the valley had simply become “*Gehenna*.” The Greek word for “valley,” *pharagx*, dropped off and the Hebrew word for valley, “*ge*,” was brought directly from the Hebrew into the Greek even though it did not have a meaning in Greek. Of course, something got lost when that happened, and what got lost was that *Gehenna* was a real place, the “Valley of Hinnom” and not some otherworldly fiery region.

Christ spoke in Aramaic or Hebrew, so his audience was never confused about the identity of the place he was speaking of. Christ’s audience knew the *Ge Hinnom* very well, and a large percentage of them had probably thrown garbage there. They understood perfectly what Jesus was saying and the seriousness of his words: if someone continues in wanton sin, then at the judgment he would not be let into the kingdom, but like the garbage, would be thrown out and destroyed. These are hard words, but they are the truth, and Christ taught them.

Christ’s audience knew about the valley of Hinnom where the garbage was burned until it was gone, but they would have known nothing about a place where people are burned alive forever. The Old Testament certainly does not mention such a place. However, when *Gehenna* is translated “hell,” English readers are led to believe that when Christ spoke of *Ge Hinnom* he was speaking of a place of eternal torment. He was not. He was speaking of the simple concept that the wicked and unsaved will be destroyed.

The wicked will, like the garbage, be totally consumed into nothingness. Their lives will end in every way.

The concept of “burning forever in hell” came into Christianity from the Greeks who believed in an “immortal soul.” It is important, however, to realize that the phrase “immortal soul” is not in the Bible. Eternal torment is not the teaching of Scripture. John 3:16, and many other verses, teach the simple truth that each person will either live forever or be destroyed.

Although it is common for Christians to teach that the unquenchable fire and worms that do not die refer to everlasting torment, that is not the case. No one in Christ’s audience thought the garbage thrown into Gehenna burned forever, they knew that the fire burned and the worms ate until the garbage was gone. The picture of Gehenna is one of the total destruction of the sinner. At the Judgment, sinners will be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15), which Christ compared to the Valley of Hinnom (Gehenna). In the lake of fire sinners will burn until they are completely consumed. There will be no repentance accepted, and no restoration to life. The punishment is not for a specific time of repayment, as if the sinners were only in jail, after which they are restored to everlasting life. No, their death will be ultimate and final. The fire will not be “quenched,” it will burn until all the garbage is gone. The worms will not “die” and thus their work be interrupted, in Gehenna they eat until there is no more garbage to consume. Thus, the “punishment” of the sinners (not “punishing,” as if they were still alive) is eternal. The people whose bodies are burned in the Valley of Hinnom never receive eternal life. They die, and that punishment, their death, lasts forever.

5:27. Quoted from Exod. 20:14

5:29. We have gone with “cause you to fall” as a translation of *skandalizō* (4624 σκανδαλίζω). “Offend you” misses the mark, because many people are not offended by sin, especially their own. You may or may not be offended by your own sin, but that is not the point of the verse. The idea is that if your hand causes you to fall away from obedience, then something has to be done. We felt that “cause you to stumble” was too weak, given that by definition stumble means “almost fall.” Christ is not saying that if your hand almost makes you fall, then cut it off, but rather if your hand causes you to fall into sin and disobedience, do what it takes to stop the situation from happening.

“cut it off.” This is the figure of speech *Hyperbole* (exaggeration; Cp. Bullinger; *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*). The people of the Eastern culture often use hyperbole to make a point, even as we Westerners do. We say, “I’m starved,” when we mean we are hungry, or “I’m freezing” when we are uncomfortably cold. In the same way, people in the biblical culture overstated points to make a point. In this case, Christ was saying that people need to take drastic action to keep from sinning. This is a lesson we all need to learn: many people make peace with their sin rather than deal with it and stop sinning.

Gehenna: see note on Matt. 5:22.

5:30. Gehenna: see note on Matt. 5:22.

5:31. Quoted from Deut. 24:1.

5:32. “Sexual immorality.” The Greek is *porneia*, (#4202 πορνεία,) *Porne* (4202) is traditionally a female prostitute, while *pornos* (#4205) is the masculine and in the Greek culture, especially early on, referred to a male prostitute. However, especially in the NT,

the words were used in a more general sense, however, they still retained some of the gender overtones.

5:33. Quoted from Lev. 19:12; Num. 30:2.

5:38. Quoted from Exod. 21:24 (Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21)

5:43. Quoted from Lev. 19:18.

6:1. “righteousness.” This is the figure of speech, Metonymy (Cp. Bullinger; *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*). The result, righteousness, is put instead of the action that produces it. A more literal rendition of the verse, without the figure, would read, “Take care that you do not do your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them....”

“no reward from your Father.” This is a very strong warning for people to watch the motives that drive their actions. If a person does good deeds, which normally would be rewarded by God in the future Paradise, but he only does them to impress people, when people are impressed that is his payment. God will not pay us for work we do not do for His glory.

6:4. The word “openly” was added by scribes to some Greek texts, but it is clearly not in the original (Cp. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*).

6:5. “like to.” The Greek is *phileō* (#5368 φιλέω). See note on John 21:15.

6:6. “inner room.” A room in the interior of the house. Calling it a “closet” misses the point, since most people think of closets as a place to store clothes. Jesus was saying to go into an inner room where no one would see, so your devotions could be private.

The word “openly” was added by scribes to some Greek texts, but it is clearly not in the original (Cp. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*).

6:7. “keep repeating the same phrases.” The Greek word is *battologeō* (#945 βατταλογέω), and it means, use the same words again and again (BDAG), “to babble” in the sense of trying to achieve success in prayer by heaping up repetitions (Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*). Williams translates it as “keep on repeating set phrases.” That is what many religions do, repeat set prayers because “they think that they will be heard for their many words.”

6:9. “in the heavens.” Jesus would have been speaking Hebrew (possibly Aramaic), and in Hebrew, “heavens” is always plural. The Greek text accurately reflects Jesus words, and has heavens in the plural. It is always best to represent the idioms of the culture accurately if possible.

“Hallowed be thy name” = let your name be sanctified. This a reference to the coming kingdom when the people will “keep My name holy” (Isa. 29:23) and Cp. Ezek. 36:23.

6:13. “The evil *one*.” The word “one” is correctly supplied. It is common in Greek that an adjective is made into a noun by the addition of the definite article before the adjective. Thus, “evil” is just “evil,” but “the evil” actually means “the evil one,” i.e., the Slanderer (aka, the Devil). Cp. 1 John 5:19 where “the evil” also means “the evil one.” Cp. Rev. 1:19, where “the Living” actually is “the Living One.”

6:18. The word “openly” was added by scribes to some Greek texts, but it is clearly not in the original (Cp. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*).

6:22. See note on Luke 11:34.

6:24. “Wealth.” The Greek is *mammōnas* (#3126 μα(μ)μωνᾶς). “Mammon” was the Syrian god of riches. Thus, the idea is that you cannot serve both God and the idol of

Wealth. In Luke 16:9 mammon is not compared to serving God, so simply “wealth” is a better translation there.

7:6. In this verse “dogs” and “pigs” represent those things that are most unclean and vile to the Jew. Although in some contexts, “dogs” represent Gentiles, that is not the case here, for even Jesus gave pearls of wisdom to Gentiles (Cp. the Samaritan woman in John 4, for example). Here they refer to those who are unclean and ungodly in their thoughts and lifestyle. Those who reject the pearls of love and blessings that are given to them will not only reject what was said to them, but often use what was said to them against the one who spoke to them. The verse is a lesson in that we have to use wisdom in what we say to whom. Proverbs 1:7 says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.”

7:7. “keep asking.” This verb is in the continuous present tense. See commentary on John 16:24, “keep asking.”

7:15. “destructive, greedy.” The Greek is *harpax* (#727 ἄρπαιξ), and means, “(1) vicious, ravenous, destructive, like a wild animal (MT 7.15); (2) violently greedy (LU 18.11); substantivally [when used as a noun] robber, swindler (1C 6.10) (Friberg’s Lexicon). Jesus, speaking of the false prophets, compared them to wolves, and used the adjective *harpax*, which means both destructive and greedy. Most versions chose one definition or the other so that the one word in the Greek text matches one word in the English translation, but we felt that the greedy and destructive nature of wolves and false prophets needed to be accurately represented in English. One Greek word carries both meanings, but two are necessary in the English translation. False prophets are very destructive, and greedy in that they never seem to be satisfied, pouring out their evil prophecies upon unsuspecting people.

7:23. “Depart from me, you who work lawlessness.” It is very important that the Christian understand this verse. Our abilities and talents are given to us by God. Therefore, when we use them we get the credit for using them, but the glory goes to God. What is much more difficult than using our God-given talents is developing the godly character of Christ, such as the fruit of the spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23) and the character that leaders are supposed to have developed (1 Tim. 3:3-12; Titus 1:6-9). In the world, talent is of more value than character. If a person is a good singer and can pack an auditorium, the fact that he or she is a drunkard, sexually immoral, mean-spirited, etc., gets overlooked by the world. This attitude must never be allowed to leak over into Christianity. Every Christian has God-given talents. There are great Christian singers, administrators, teachers, businessmen and women, etc., but their talent, and their success, is never as important as whether or not they exhibit the character of Christ. That was the case in this section of Matthew. Jesus teaches us that at the Judgment men and women with ministries and abilities in prophecy, working miracles and discerning of spirits will come forward, proud of their “great accomplishments.” However, they did not develop the character of Christ and thus were not part of “God’s team,” so to speak. They “did their own thing,” and thus they are said to “work lawlessness,” i.e., do things in a way that does not follow the ways and laws of God.

8:2. “bowed down before.” See note on Matthew 2:2.

8:17. Quoted from Isaiah 53:4.

8:29. “What do we have in common with you?” The literal Greek is, “What is there to us and to you?” This is a Greek idiom, and its meaning is somewhat flexible, depending on

the context in which it is used. Here, the essence is, “What do I have in common with you?” (Wuest, *Word Studies; Vincent’s Word Studies*). The message is “Leave me alone” (Lenski). However, the phrase is also used when Jesus was speaking to his mother about changing water to wine, and there the essence is more, “What *is that* to me and to you?” (see commentary note on John 2:4). This phrase is spoken by demons 5 times in the Four Gospels, but two are in the singular, as here, and three are in the plural. This is important and gives us a peek into how demons work. In this record in Matthew, while there are many demons in these men, Matthew has more than one speaking, while Mark and Luke are singular, as if only one demon was speaking. Thus, one is in charge, but others are chiming in.

Demons speaking to Jesus:

In the Synagogue: **Mark 1:24, Luke 4:34** τί ἡμῖν καὶ σοὶ [both plural]

From the tombs: **Matthew 8:29** τί ἡμῖν καὶ σοί [plural], and **Mark 5:7, Luke 8:28** τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί [singular].

The slight difference in the Greek words in the record of the tombs shows that in the record of the tombs there was one demon who was the main speaker, but also that the demons spoke as a group. The Greek word *hemin* (ἡμῖν) is plural, “we,” while *emoi* (ἐμοὶ) is singular, “I.”

9:8. “authority given to men.” Some of the teachers of the Law could not believe that a man could forgive sins. In a parallel account recorded in Mark they claim, “He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Mk. 2:7). Scripture never says only God can forgive sins, instead, it says, “The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son” (John 5:22). Jesus corrects their false idea by performing the miracle to prove he has authority to forgive sins. This passage is not meant to prove that Jesus was God, rather, it is to show that God “has given [Jesus] authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man” (John 5:27). Notice that the onlookers were amazed that such authority had been given *to men*. They did not conclude that this man must be God, but that God must have given authority to this man to forgive sins. Elsewhere, Jesus gives the authority to the apostles saying, “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld” (John 20:23). If being given the authority to forgive sins means one is God, then we should conclude the apostles were God also. But this is surely absurd. Instead we should acknowledge that the authority ultimately comes from God who has given it to a man, Jesus Christ. And further we should be warned that if we do not forgive men of their sins, we will not be forgiven of ours (Matt. 6:14-15).

9:13. Quoted from Hos. 6:6.

9:18. “bowed down before.” See note on Matt. 2:2. The synagogue leader did not think Jesus was God, but rather was paying him homage, as he would to a superior.

9:28. The blind men cried out to him as he was walking, but he ignored them until he got inside the house he was going to, leaving them to follow him as best they could, given their blind condition. This would be considered very unchristian behavior today, and be called “unloving,” and other such things. Nevertheless, Jesus did it, and it was to crystallize their faith. They did not give up on asking him for healing, an act of faith.

9:34. Pure spiritual arrogance. They had no evidence except their displeasure.

9:38. Implore = *deomai* (1189 δέομαι). See Trench. *Deomai* is a specific request, not a general prayer. It is a petition.

10:28. Gehenna: see note on Matt. 5:22.

10:29. Penny = the Roman *as* or the Greek *asserion* (787 ἀσσάριον). It was worth 1/16 of a denarius (or drachma), which was a day's wage for a day laborer or soldier. If a day laborer makes \$8 per hour, or \$64 per day, then an *asserion* would be worth about \$4.

“apart from your father.” The phrase contains the figure of speech ellipsis (Cp. Bullinger; *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*); it is constructed in the Greek by the preposition *aneu* (#427 ἄνευ), which means “without” or “apart from,” and then the words for “your father” (*patros humōn*) functioning as the genitive of possession—the object of the father's possession is elided. Literally, it would read, “apart from of your father,” with the involvement on God's part elided for emphasis. We have left the figure of speech in the translation, rather than supply the elided word. Some have interpreted the ellipsis to mean “will” and included it in the translation; e.g. “apart from the will of your Father” (NIV). However, the text itself does not demand this. As Louw-Nida write, “The particular manner or mode of involvement by God must depend upon the broader context and not upon the meaning of ἄνευ.”

When we examine the broader context, there are reasons to interpret the passage to mean, “apart from *the knowledge* of your father,” rather than “will.” The parallel passage in Luke 12:6 reads, “Are not five sparrows sold for two assaria? And not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God,” indicating knowledge and awareness rather than will. Further, the next verse in Matthew declares that, “the hairs of your head have been counted,” i.e. God knows how many there are. We conclude along with Robertson (*Word Pictures*), “There is comfort in this thought for us all. Our father who knows about the sparrows knows and cares about us.”

10:35, 36: Quoted from Mic. 7:6.

10:37. “is attached to.” The Greek is *phileō* (#5368 φιλέω). See note on John 21:15.

11:7. “A reed shaken by the wind.” The area around the Jordan River where John was baptizing had very dense vegetation, including lots of reeds that grew close to the water. No one ever went to see them. Jesus was speaking to the people about John, whom the people had gone out to see. Was he “a reed shaken with the wind,” in other words, a man of weak character, easily swayed by circumstances and the opinions of others? Or was he a man of soft clothing, in other words, rich and politically connected? Or was he a prophet? Jesus testified that he was more than a prophet, but the very one Isaiah had referred to as a voice in the wilderness.

11: 10. Quoted from Mal. 3:1.

11:11. “least important *person*.” The Greek is *mikros* (#3398 μικρός). It can refer to being a limited size, measure, or quantity, or it can refer to being of little import, and thus means insignificant or unimportant. In this verse it is an adjective, and so the supplied noun “person” is understood. The grammarians argue about whether *mikros* is used in a comparative sense (“the unimportant person”) or a superlative sense (the least important person) (cp. Lange's Commentary). However, “least” seems to make sense in this context. The Kingdom of Heaven has not come yet, but will come when Christ sets it up on earth after he comes and fights the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19). At that time the dead people who are judged to be righteous are raised and get to live with Christ in his kingdom (Ezek. 37; Rev. 20:4-6). Thus, the “least” person in the Kingdom of Heaven is still in the Kingdom of Heaven, and has passed from death to everlasting life. No wonder the “least” in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John! Also, that explains the next

verse, in which Jesus speaks of how to attain the Kingdom of Heaven. No one can ignore the commands of God and expect to get in. Christ said at many times, and in many different ways, that getting into the Kingdom took work and focus. The way in was narrow and difficult (Matt. 7:13). God's commands had to be obeyed (Matt. 19:16-19). A person had to take up his cross and follow Christ (Luke 9:23-26). In Matthew 11:12 Jesus taught the same message, that it took a violent effort, but the Kingdom of Heaven could indeed be seized as a prize. Surely the Kingdom of Heaven and everlasting life is available for those who really want it, and anyone there is greater than John, who was still in his fleshly body.

Some theologians teach that the one who is "least" is Jesus himself, because Jesus was younger than John by six months. However, that interpretation seems quite forced, because there is no reason in the context or culture that Jesus would point to the fact that although he was younger than John he would be greater. The Messiah was always assumed in all the prophecies and Scripture to be the greatest of all the prophets and indeed, the greatest person to ever live.

11:12. Matthew 11:12 has been an enigma for generations of Bible scholars for a couple reasons: the vocabulary in the Greek New Testament is unclear due to multiple possible definitions of some of the Greek words, and also the verb *baizetai* ("suffers" or "has been forcefully advancing") can be either passive voice or middle voice. Because of that the verse has been translated in two different ways, represented by the two versions below.

ASV "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force."

NIV "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it."

There are two basic possible interpretations:

1. The passive voice of *baizetai* (i.e., "suffereth") would indicate that the Kingdom of heaven is being attacked. The context shows that John was in jail and Jesus was being persecuted. Furthermore, "violent" (the Greek word is usually used in a negative sense) men are trying to "take" it, i.e., trying to overcome it and stop it. (Cp. *New International Biblical Commentary* by Mounce; *The Gospel According to Matthew* by Morris).
2. The middle voice of *baizetai* would indicate that the Kingdom is "forcefully" (instead of violently) "advancing itself," i.e., it is moving forward, and those men who are forceful and determined are the ones who will seize it. The context shows that the Gospel message is being preached and people have to make a decision about it. (St. Matthews Gospel by Lenski; *Companion Bible* by Bullinger).

The more likely interpretation of the verse is as we have in the REV, also represented in the NIV. The first interpretation, that the kingdom of heaven suffers violence is less likely due to the qualifying phrase, "from the time of John the Baptist until now." The Kingdom had always suffered violence, it had always been attacked. This is clear from the time when Cain killed his brother on down through the centuries, so it does not seem proper to say that it has suffered violence from the time of John. In contrast, with the appearance of John and Jesus the kingdom was forcefully advancing. Both John and Jesus were preaching that "the Kingdom is near." John was ministering in the power and spirit of Elijah, even as Gabriel has said to Zacharias (Luke 1:17), and Jesus was ministering more powerfully than any prophet before him. There is a third possibility that

is less likely, and also hard to represent fully in the English. Since the Greek can be legitimately translated both ways, it is possible that both interpretations are valid. In that case, this verse would be an example of the figure of speech *amphibologia*, literally, “a throwing in both directions” (Bullinger, *Figures*). However, in the REV we have gone with the translation we consider more likely.

“are seizing it as a prize.” The Greek is *harpazō* (#726 ἁρπάζω), and it means “to make off with someone’s property by attacking or seizing, steal, carry off, drag away, to grab or seize suddenly so as to remove or gain control, snatch/take away” (BDAG). It is commonly used with to seizing or dragging off someone else’s property. Thus in this case the clear implication of the word is that forceful men grab hold of the kingdom as a prize for themselves, not just that they “seize it.” Lenski writes: “...the kingdom itself, with all its gifts, treasures, and blessings put power and courage into them “to snatch,” let us say “to grab” it all. Williams translates the last half of the verse: ...those who take it by storm are seizing it as a precious prize.” God’s people have to make up their mind to “grab” the kingdom blessings, and that usually takes both desire and effort.

11:14. On John being Elijah, see notes on Matthew 17:10 and 11.

12:7. Quoted from Hos. 6:6.

12:18-21: Quoted from Isaiah 42:1-4.

12:26. “How then....” This is the figure of speech *Erotesis* (rhetorical question).

12:27. “sons.” The Greek word is *huios* (#5207 υἱός), and means “son,” but the key to understanding what the verse is saying is recognizing that “son” was used in many ways in Semitic languages, just as we use it in several ways in English. In this case, the “sons” are the students, or disciples, of the Pharisees, in the same way that in the Old Testament, the disciples of the prophets were called “the sons of the prophets” (2 Kings 2:3, 5, 7, 15). Other meanings of the word “son” include: someone who was a person’s immediate child (John 9:19), a grandchild or descendant, such as a “son of David” (Matt. 1:20); a male heir that is adopted or taken into the family (Exod. 2:10); a younger person for whom you have taken on a fatherly role and have special affection for (1 Pet. 5:13); a person who is closely related or associated, especially in a group; all mankind is referred to as the “sons of men,” and Jesus referred to himself as “the son of man” which confused the religious leaders, because it could have been a simple way of saying “a man,” but was also a Messianic title due to Daniel 7:13; one who has the character, and even follows in the footsteps, of another (Acts 13:10 “son of the Devil”); one who has a certain specific characteristics is called a “son” of that characteristic (“sons of disobedience” are disobedient people, Eph. 2:2).

12:31. “blasphemy.” The word is *blasphemia* (#988 βλασφημία), see commentary on Mark 3:28, “blasphemies...blaspheme.”

12:32. “the Holy Spirit” Literally, “the Spirit, the Holy *one*.” A name of God. See note on Matthew 1:18.

12:33. “reckon.” The Greek is *poieō* (#4160 ποιέω), which is properly “to do” or “to make.” However, it can refer to what is made up in the mind, and thus what is thought, reckoned, etc. Examples of this include John 5:18; 8:53; and 10:33. The key to understanding this verse is realizing that Jesus is referring back to the evil and hypocritical judgment of the Pharisees, who said that when Jesus was delivering people by casting out demons, he was doing it by the prince of demons (Matt. 12:24). Jesus was telling the Pharisees that they could not rightly come to the conclusion that Jesus was evil

when the result of his work was good. If they thought the tree (i.e., Jesus) was evil, then his fruit would have to be evil too. But if they acknowledged that Jesus' fruit was good, then they should acknowledge that he was good. Cassirer translates: "Suppose a tree is good, then its fruit will be good; suppose a tree has fallen into decay, then its fruit will be worthless." Jesus taught with great consistency when it came to people and the fruit they produced (Matt. 7:15-20).

12:40. Quoted from Jonah 1:17.

13:13. Why do the listeners not understand? Is it because they have covered their own ears and closed their hearts, as Matthew's record portrays (13:14-15), or because God has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts as John's words could be read to say (John 12:38-40)? The answer comes only when we put these two records together and understand them in light of the entirety of scripture's teaching on this subject.

Why did the Lord speak to the crowds with parables? To this question Christ could have responded that he takes his own advice, by not throwing his pearls before the swine. God says, "Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the good sense of your words" (Prov. 23:9). Parables are designed so that the hearers must think, seek, and even ask to understand. By speaking to the crowds in this way, the Lord separates those who have a will to listen and be healed from those who foolishly reject his teachings.

All three synoptic gospels record the parable of the Sower in the context of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah (Matt. 13:10-18; Mark 4:2-12; Luke 8:9-11). John does not relate the Sower parable but speaks of the prophecy of Isaiah: John 12:35-42. It is interesting that the Sower is related in this context, for this parable deals with how one's heart is prepared to receive the Good News. In the parable of the Sower there is no indication that God decides what kind of soil one's heart is. Rather, it is the own person's responsibility to determine the nature of his heart's soil. This is where the quotation from Isaiah comes in. Jesus says in Matthew the prophecy "is fulfilled" (3:14, present indicative), in that some of those listening had dull hearts and could barely hear, and further that they have chosen to close their eyes and ears lest they see, hear, understand, and turn. The Greek word for "lest," *mepote* (#3379 μήποτε), is an indicator of negative purpose, showing they purposely intended to not see, hear, or understand. These Jews hardened their hearts against God.

John begins the record by pointing out even though Jesus had done so many signs before these people, they still did not believe in him (12:37). This "resulted in" another word of Isaiah being fulfilled regarding Israel's unbelief: "Who has believed what he heard from us?" (12:38). The "resulted in" expression of this verse is a *hina* + subjunctive result clause (see entry on Matt. 2:15, "resulting in... what was spoken being fulfilled"). John says it was "for this reason," "on account of this," (Gk: *dia touto*) that these people could not believe (12:39). That is to say, *because* they rejected Jesus and refused to believe, "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them" (12:40).

God is portrayed as doing the blinding and hardening in the passage in John. Yet we know from Matthew these people hardened their own hearts first by choosing not to believe. John tells us that it was because of this unbelief they were blinded. How are we to understand this blinding? It is not as though God actively hardens the hearts of those who close their eyes to the truth. Rather, he has allowed them to be blinded by setting in

place a spiritual principal that while one is rejecting Jesus they are left in a state of spiritual blindness. It is the idiom of permission (See *Don't Blame God*, Ch. 4). Scripture teaches that in actuality, the devil is the one who blinds these people: "In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:4); it is only when they turn to the Lord that the veil is taken away (2 Cor. 3:14-16). Unbelievers have dull hearts and ears that can barely hear, but whether they will turn to the Lord or decide to close their eyes is their free choice. If they turn to him, the veil is lifted off their hearts and they can see at last. But if they choose to reject Christ and close their eyes, as some did on this day, those people remain under Satan's dominion of spiritual blindness. This is why Christ told these people, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you... While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light (John 12:35a, 36).

Once someone rejects the light they are "overtaken" by darkness and God allows them to stay in this state until they turn to the Lord and are healed—so that Christ may be the only means of spiritual enlightenment. Only in the sense of this permission can it be said that God blinds them and hardens their hearts. Thus we can get to the proper understanding of these passages only if we consider the whole of scripture. We must put the records together to understand the full picture, that people first choose to harden their own hearts and as a result are left by God in a state of spiritual blindness.

When this record occurs in Mark 4:12 and Luke 8:10 it comes in the form of two purpose-result clauses (see entry on Matt. 2:15, "resulting in...what was spoken being fulfilled"), thus sandwiching the truth revealed in Matthew and John together into one perspective. They write that Christ's teachings come in parables "so that" the people may see but not perceive, hear but not understand. The "so that" indicates the purpose and the result of the speaking in parables.

13:14, 15. Quoted from Isaiah 6:9, 10.

13:25. "darnel." The Greek word is *zizanion* (#2215 ζιζάνιον) and it refers to the plant *Lolium temulentum*, or the Bearded Darnel. There are other varieties of *Lolium*, but they do not closely resemble wheat, and therefore are almost certainly not the plant referred to in the parable. The Bearded Darnel looks so much like wheat that it cannot be distinguished from it except by an expert, until the grain starts to form. The darnel grain is much smaller than wheat and dark brown. The seeds of the darnel were believed to be poisonous to men and animals (although not fowl). It has now been asserted by some botanists that it is not the seed of the darnel that is poisonous, but rather that it is easily susceptible to getting a mold that is poisonous (Harold and Alma Moldenke, *Plants of the Bible*, Dover Publications, NY, 1952). Nevertheless, the ancients, and even the modern Arabs, do not make any such distinction, and consider the seeds to be poisonous. The symptoms of eating the darnel include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, convulsions, and sometimes even death. The roots of the darnel are quite extensive, and when it appears in a wheat field, become entangled with the roots of the wheat so that if anyone tried to pull up the darnel they would most certainly pull up the wheat also.

Using the translation "weeds" as many modern translations do misses much of the depth of the parable. People frequently "weed" their gardens, and it is not hurtful but even helps the other plants grow. Only by knowing that one cannot do that with darnel makes that part of the parable make sense. Also, the parable epitomizes "by their fruit

you will know them,” because it is when the grain starts to appear that the darnel can be easily seen.

13:32. “Smallest... becomes a tree.” A hyperbole, a common figure of speech used in discourse. The mustard seed is not literally the smallest seed, nor does it become a tree, but the point is well made that something very small becomes something very big.

13:33. Three *satons* of meal is about 9 gallons of meal.

13:35. Quoted from Ps. 78:2.

13:40 “burned up.” The Greek is *katakaiō* (#2618 κατακαίω), and means to burn up, or to consume. It cannot be overstated that the weeds “burn up,” they do not burn forever. Similarly, the people who are unsaved will be burned up in Gehenna, they will not burn forever.

13:42. “The weeping and the gnashing of teeth.” Not just any weeping and gnashing, but “the” weeping and gnashing that was understood from the OT prophets. Daniel 12:2 said some people would be resurrected to “shame” and “contempt.” Joel 3:1-14 spoke of the multitudes in the “Valley of Jehoshaphat (Heb. = “Valley of Yahweh has judged).

13:47. “lake.” He was teaching from a boat on the Lake of Galilee, so the context dictates that *thalasso* be translated “lake.”

14:26. “Ghost” is from the Greek *phantasma*, which means “an appearance.” Something that would appear and be of the spiritual world. Ghost is not exactly a perfect translation, since “ghost” means the spirit of a dead person, while “*phantasma*” might be any sort of spiritual appearance. Nevertheless, the disciples yelling, “It is an appearance!” just does not seem to do the verse justice.

14:33. “paid him homage.” See note on Matthew 2:2.

15:3. “The *kai* (#2532 καί) before the emphatic *humeis* (5210 ὑμεῖς) is not ‘also’ and does not place the Pharisees alongside of Jesus’ disciples [as if they too had sinned]; it signifies ‘even you yourselves,’ the very ones who are truly guilty of transgression, while they pretend to find transgression in others” Lenski, *Matthew*, p. 583.

15:4. Quoted from Exod. 20:12 (Deut. 5:16) and Exod. 21:17.

15:8, 9. Quoted from Isaiah 29:13. “Moreover” from the quote in the LXX; Lenski, *Matthew*, p. 587.

15:25. “bow down before.” See note on Matt. 2:2.

15:26, 27. (Cp. Mark 7:27 and 28)

“good.” Read below.

“dog” = little dog. This verse is a wonderful example of how one reading the Bible must pay attention to the cultural background involved. Although Jesus was Jewish and most of the time in the Gospels the standards of Jewish culture apply, in this verse the standards of Greek culture apply. The Greek is *kunarium* (2952 κυνάριον), which is the diminutive of “dog.” It sometimes happened in the Greek and Roman world (although not in the Jewish world except among those who had given up being Kosher and were more apt to follow Roman customs) that “little dogs,” or “house dogs” were kept, and like our house dogs today, sometimes ate under (or beside) the table (Cp. Xenophon, Plato, Theophrastus, Plutarch, others. See Thayer’s lexicon and Liddell and Scott). The word can also refer to “puppies,” (Cp. Liddell and Scott; Vine) but that would probably not be the case here, since the woman was a Syrophenician and would have been familiar with the Greek custom of having a little house dog that would eat by the table. The reference

to the “little dog” is made only in the account of the Syrophonecian woman. There is no other use of *kunarion* in the OT LXX or the Greek NT.

That Jesus would say “little dogs” is amazing grace. He did not, even by implication, call her a “dog,” which in Greek culture had overtones of shamelessness or audacity in women (cp. Liddell and Scott). Instead, by using the word “little dog,” or “housedog,” he only made a glancing reference that she did not deserve any help (but really, who does?). He opened a door of grace for her, and she walked through it. Also, he said it was not “good,” *kalos* (#2570 καλός), for the children’s bread to be thrown to the little dogs. He did not use the word “lawful” (*exestin*, # 1832). Rather, it was not “good” or “proper,” or “a fine thing to do.”

15:27. “for even...” It would not be correct to translate this as “but,” “however,” etc. The woman is not opposing Jesus in any way. She is merely pointing out that the puppies do get crumbs when the family eats.

16:18. “congregation.” This is the translation of the word commonly translated “Church,” *ekklesia* (#1577 ἐκκλησία). In modern English the term “Church” refers to a Christian building of worship; however this is not how the word is used in Scripture. *Ekklesia* has a wide range of meanings, but none of them refer to a physical building. At its base meaning the word refers to an assembly of people. The gathering of people may or may not be for religious purposes, as can be seen in its use in Acts 19:32, which describes a riotous mob coming together with no particular ethnic or religious affiliation (ESV: “most of them did not know why they had come together”). In Acts 7:38 the term is used of the Jewish throng, including some Gentiles (Ex. 12:38), who were led out of Egypt by Moses. So the term does not solely apply to the Christian Church of this administration. This can be seen by the Matthew 18:17 usage, where Christ describes his congregation of people from any dispensation; *ekklesia* here having a multidispensational application.

To be sure, other than describing a group of people in a general sense, the term *ekklesia* is used particularly of Christians and the Body of Christ. This is made clear in Colossians 1:18: Christ is “the head of the body, the church,” which refers to the entire world congregation of Christians (Cp. also: Acts 5:11). The term can be used solely of a particular local assembly of believers (e.g., 3 John 1:10), or to specific groups, which by extension applies to the entire Church (e.g., 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:2; Eph. 1:22). Lastly, *ekklesia* is used in Revelation (2:1, etc) in regard to the congregation after the Rapture. These are Jews and some God-fearing Gentiles, but not Christians, by this time they had been Raptured off the earth.

16:19. “whatever you forbid on earth must be already forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth must be already permitted in heaven.” On the flyleaf of the paper cover to *The New Testament: A Private Translation in the Language of the People*, by Charles B. Williams (1953), the Greek grammarian Mantey, (co-author of the well respected Greek grammar book, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* by Dana and Mantey) introduced the translation by saying that Williams did a better job of translating the Greek verb into English than any other New Testament he had studied. One of the examples he gave was Matthew 16:19 and 18:18. These are almost always translated as:

NIV: “I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

However, the phrase, “will be bound in heaven” is not a good translation of the Greek verb. The “to be” verb is not a simple future, but rather a future passive periphrastic (and thus is most accurately translated “shall have been”), while the verb “bind” is a perfect passive participle. Williams translates the verse as: Matt. 16:19: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you forbid on earth must be what is already forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth must be what is already permitted in heaven.”

Matt. 18:18: “...whatever you forbid on earth must be already forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth must be already permitted in heaven.”

The 1995 revision of the New American Standard Bible follows that translation quite closely: Matt. 16:19: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” Matt. 18:18: “Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”

Williams’ translation not only fits the Greek, but is how ministry actually works. God’s ministers do not make commands that God must then follow. Rather, God’s ministers work hard to be aware of what God is doing, and then follow His lead. God’s ministers follow God’s guidance, so what we bind or loose on earth must be inside the will of God, or what He has first done in heaven. Jesus himself worked that way, even as he said over and over: “So Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise’” (John 5:19 ESV). “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge...” (John 5:30). “For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me” (John 6:38 ESV). “...I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me” (John 8:28b ESV). “The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works” (John 14:10b ESV).

It is clear that even Jesus did not bind and loose on His own, without knowing the Father’s will. Similarly, we also must know what God has already bound or loosed in heaven before we try to act on earth. It is appropriate that when Jesus was giving Peter the keys to the kingdom, he also told Peter that he walk in the will of God and not try to bind or loose on his own. The ministry does not belong to people, it belongs to God and Jesus, and the minister of the Lord follows the leading of the Lord.

Robertson provides a wonderful explanation of this difficult verse, based on his extensive knowledge of Greek and understanding the use of the language at the time by the Rabbis. He writes: “The same power here given to Peter belongs to every disciple of Jesus in all the ages. Advocates of papal supremacy insist on the primacy of Peter here and the power of Peter to pass on this supposed sovereignty to others. But this is all quite beside the mark. We shall soon see the disciples actually disputing again (Mt 18:1) as to which of them is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven as they will again (20:21) and even on the night before Christ’s death. Clearly neither Peter nor the rest understood Jesus to say here that Peter was to have supreme authority. What is added shows that Peter held the keys precisely as every preacher and teacher does. To ‘bind’ (*dêsêis*) in rabbinical language is to forbid, to ‘loose’ (*lusêis*) is to permit. Peter would be like a rabbi who passes on many points. ...The teaching of Jesus is the standard for Peter and

for all preachers of Christ. Note the future perfect indicative (*estai dedemenon, estai lelumenon*), a state of completion. All this assumes, of course, that Peter's use of the keys will be in accord with the teaching and mind of Christ. The binding and loosing is repeated by Jesus to all the disciples (18:18). Later after the Resurrection Christ will use this same language to all the disciples (John 20:23), showing that it was not a special prerogative of Peter. He is simply first among equals because on this occasion he was spokesman for the faith of all. . . . Every preacher uses the keys of the kingdom when he proclaims the terms of salvation in Christ." (*Word Pictures*).

Robertson correctly states (above) that the Greek is a future perfect indicative, and could literally be translated "will have been bound... will have been loosed." As he points out, this construction indicates a state of completion. Williams understands this when he translates the verse such that what we allow or forbid must be inside the will of God, or already allowed or forbidden in heaven. If God had wanted the verse to say that what we bind on earth will then be bound in heaven, the Greek would have been worded quite differently than it is.

16:21. Now that the disciples know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Matt. 16:13-17; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-21) Jesus begins to tell them that he must suffer, die, and be raised from the dead. In spite of his clear teaching about it, however, they did not understand what he meant. He taught about his suffering, death, and resurrection many times. He taught about it after the disciples recognized him as Christ (Matt. 16:21; Mark 8:31, 32; Luke 9:22); immediately after the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:9-13; Mark 9:9-13); in Galilee shortly after the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:22, 23; Mark 9:31, 32; Luke 9:43-45); at the Feast of Tabernacles (John 8:21, 28); going up to Jerusalem for the Passover during which he would be killed (Matt. 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34); and in Jerusalem (Matt. 26:2; cp. John 12:7). In spite of Jesus' clearly stating he would suffer, die, and be raised from the dead, the disciples never understood what he meant. Even after his death and resurrection, upon seeing the empty tomb, they did not understand what had happened (John 20:9). They finally understood from both the Scriptures and from the physical evidence that he would be resurrected when he appeared to them when they were behind locked doors the Sunday after the crucifixion (Luke 24:44, 45).

16:22. "never, ever." The Greek double negative *ou me* is usually translated "by no means" in the REV. However, in this case the reader may think that Peter is saying that Jesus could not be killed by any means known to man. The "never, ever" makes the point clear and preserves the double use of "no."

16:23. "Get behind me, Satan." The Greek is *hupago opiso satanas*, "Go behind me, Satan." The Greek is similar to what Jesus said to Satan in Matthew 4:10, *hupago Satanas* "Go, Satan." It is most likely that what Jesus said to Peter was just a rebuke meaning "Get away from me" (*I.C.C., Matthew; Davies and Allison*); "Get out of my sight" (Lensiki; cp. Thayer, BDAG). However, the addition of *opiso* ("behind, after"), which can in certain contexts be translated "follow," ("Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men"; Matt. 4:19, ESV) opens the possibility that Jesus is saying in essence, "Get following me," meaning, "become a disciple again," which some scholars think is what Jesus is saying. Although that is a possibility, there are a couple reasons that militate against it. For one thing, if Jesus was telling Peter to be a follower again, it seems that he would not have added "Satan." After all, "Follow me again, Satan," does not seem

very likely. Secondly, early scribes ascribed the same phrase to Satan himself in Luke 4:8. Although modern textual research shows that the phrase was added later, many Greek texts in the Western family have the same phrase in Luke 4:8 when Jesus was speaking to Satan (which is why “Get thee behind me, Satan” appears in the KJV). Thus it is clear that the early scribes did not think it was a request to return to being a proper follower, or disciple. Given the evidence, it seems that Jesus was strongly rebuking Peter, saying in essence, “Go away from me, Satan,” a harsh rebuke that would have gotten Peter’s attention immediately, and caused him to think about the seriousness of the situation.

16:27. “about to come” (Lenski; cp. Wuest, *New Testament*).

17:2. The event described in Matthew 17:1-9 (Mark 9:2-9; Luke 9:28-36) is a wonderful miracle of God’s grace, preparing Jesus for his torture and death by giving him a taste of glory and by having him talk, via a revelation vision, with Moses and Elijah, who spoke with Jesus about his death (Luke 9:31). Moses and Elijah were not there, they are dead. They could not be alive before Christ paid the price for sin. If they could be, and be in an exalted state, then anyone could be alive and in an exalted state before Jesus died, so there would have been really no point in his dying. Jesus called the event a “vision” to his disciples in Matthew 17:9, and in a vision God can show you whatever He wants to, including things in the future that have not even occurred yet (cp. the Book of Revelation). Jesus and his disciples would not have known Moses and Elijah by sight, so part of the revelation vision was an understanding of what they were seeing. This happens many times with visions. God gives someone a vision, and at the same time gives him an understanding of what he is seeing in the vision.

The transfiguration has been used to try to explain how Jesus could say in verse 28 that some of the disciples would not die until the Kingdom of God came. There are theologians who say that the “Kingdom” Christ was referring to in verse 28 actually came in some form at the Transfiguration. There are several reasons why this cannot be the case. The first and foremost is that the Kingdom did *not* come at the Transfiguration. None of the Kingdom promises were fulfilled, the angels did not come, Christ did not sit on his throne, lions do not eat straw like the oxen nor lie down with domestic animals, neither the deserts nor the people of earth have been healed, and no one has been rewarded at the Judgment. In fact, there is nothing about the Transfiguration that indicates it was the coming of the Kingdom in any sense. Christ had been teaching that the Kingdom was near since he first started teaching and preaching, and there is no theologian who says that Christ’s message, “the Kingdom is near,” is actually saying, “the Transfiguration is near.” If the Kingdom in Christ’s preaching refers to the coming Kingdom on earth, then that meaning should hold for all his teachings unless we are told differently, which of course we are not.

At the Transfiguration, Christ was given a taste of what he would be like in the future (he was clothed in white and he was glorious in appearance), but the subject being discussed was his *death* (Luke 9:31). The Kingdom could not come if the Messiah was an unacceptable sacrifice, and so his enduring to his death was extremely important. God gave Christ the vision to help prepare him for “his departure.” Many of the prophets of old, and certainly Paul and John, had visions of the future Kingdom. But it would be wrong to say that because Isaiah, Zechariah, Paul or John got a vision of the future Kingdom that meant that the Kingdom had actually come in some way, and it is wrong to

say that because Christ had a vision of the Kingdom it had come. Matthew 17:9 clearly calls the experience a “vision,” although the *NIV* translation makes that point a little less clearly, saying, “What you have seen.”

Another reason to believe that Scripture does not equate the Transfiguration with the coming Kingdom is that one place the Transfiguration is recorded in is Luke 9, but after that, in Luke 11 Christ prayed in the Lord’s Prayer, “Your kingdom come.” If Christ prayed for the Kingdom to come after the Transfiguration, then the Transfiguration was not the Kingdom. Also, other scriptures after the Transfiguration mention the coming Kingdom. Luke 12:40 speaks of the Son of Man coming, Luke 13:29 speaks of the banquet in the coming Kingdom, *etc.*

Another reason that the Transfiguration cannot be “the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom” is that Christ did not know that the Transfiguration was coming. It was a miracle done by God to help prepare Christ for his death. It was not foretold in prophecy nor anticipated in Scripture in any way. It certainly caught the only three witnesses by surprise. Jesus may have been given revelation that it was going to occur shortly before it happened, but none of the disciples knew anything about it. For Christ to tell his disciples that some of them would not die until he came in his Kingdom, and then somehow to expect them to realize that he was speaking about an unknown future event and not about the well known Kingdom they and their ancestors had expected for years, makes that interpretation unacceptable. There is simply no good reason to equate the well known and expected “Kingdom” with an unknown and unexpected vision of that Kingdom.

Lastly, it needs to be stated that if Christ were speaking of the Transfiguration, then what he actually said does not make sense and is not factual. He said, “There are some standing here which shall not taste death [i.e., die] before they see the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom.” However, the Transfiguration occurred shortly after Christ made the statement. Luke 9:28 says it was about 8 days. It is almost certain that *all* of his disciples were still alive 8 days later. Even if one of them had died, that is no justification for Jesus to say that only “some” would be alive. That Christ would prophesy that “some” of his disciples would be alive 8 days later makes no sense.

Furthermore, Jesus openly foretold that “some” of his disciples would still be alive to see the Kingdom. Remember, however, that only Peter, James and John were present at the Transfiguration, and they were strictly told keep it a secret (Matt. 17:9). If it was a secret between Jesus and 3 disciples, how could it be the fulfillment of Jesus’ public prophecy in any meaningful sense?

It can be concluded that it makes no sense at all that Christ would say that only some of his disciples would see him come in his Kingdom if what he was actually talking about was his Transfiguration. However, Christ knew the Old Testament very well, and he knew that many people would die in the Tribulation that would precede his Second Coming, Armageddon, and his setting up his kingdom on earth. Even if his Second Coming was very soon, after only seven years of Tribulation, it was still probable that most of his disciples would be killed. Thus it makes perfect sense for Christ to say that, after the Tribulation when the Son of Man came into his kingdom, only “some” would be alive to actually see it.

17:9. “from among the dead.” See Romans 4:24. Wuest says, “from among those who are dead.”

17:10. “Then why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” The religious leaders of Christ’s day taught that Elijah would come before the Messiah, a doctrine based on a misinterpretation of Malachi 4:5: “See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.” However, Elijah was long dead, and God was not going to raise him from the dead. In Malachi 4:5 the name “Elijah” is the figure of speech *Antonomasia*, or “name change,” which is the figure that occurs when we call one person by the name of another person, so that the first person has ascribed to him the characteristics of the second person. For example, we say to a child who is jumping on the couch, “Stop that, Tarzan!” We know the child’s name is not “Tarzan,” but by calling him that we ascribe the jungle behavior of Tarzan to the child. In the Bible, Jehu was called “Zimri” (2 Kings 9:31); the Messiah is called “David” because he would shepherd his people (Ezek. 37:24), Judah is called “Sodom” because it was so wicked (Isa. 1:10); etc. Elijah’s life and ministry paralleled John’s in many ways, so calling John “Elijah” was appropriate. That John would be like Elijah was made clear to Zacharias by the angel Gabriel. When Zacharias was ministering in the Temple, Gabriel appeared to him and said that Elizabeth would have a son they were to name “John,” and he would go before God “in the spirit and power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17). For those who remembered the angels words years later when John started his ministry, it was clear that John was indeed the “Elijah,” who was to come.

17:11. “Elijah is coming, and will restore all things.” Jesus knew that John the Baptist was “Elijah.” Here Jesus used the words of the doctrinal formula commonly used about Elijah by the religious leaders to show they were quite correct—Elijah was coming, but now he had already come. The Scribes had not been wrong when they said “Elijah is coming,” they just did not know to whom they referred and thus missed it when he was among them. Jesus, however, knew that “Elijah” was John the Baptist, as is clear from verses 12 and 13. Technically, “is coming” is an indicative present, not a future, is an example of what is referred to as the “prophetic present,” something that is future that is spoken of as if it was present (Robertson, *Grammar*, pp. 869, 870)

17:18. “And Jesus rebuked him.” The “him” refers to the demon. This is a good example of how spiritual insight is necessary to understand the text. An unbeliever would not understand who Jesus rebuked, but it certainly was not the child.

17:21. This verse was added to some texts by being copied from Mark 9:29. The textual evidence is quite clear that it was not in the original version of Matthew.

17:22. “about to be” (Lenski; Wuest’s Expanded New Testament).

17:27. “lake.” The Sea of Galilee, see context, v. 24. They were in Capernaum, right beside the Sea of Galilee.

18:9. Gehenna: see note on Matt. 5:22.

18:11. The textual evidence is that this verse was not in the original text, but was added by copyists to harmonize with Luke 19:10. See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*.

18:16. Quoted from Deut. 19:15.

18:19. The Greek word *palin* (#3825 πάλιν), here rendered as “again,” could be translated “furthermore.” Its sense is described by BDAG as a “marker of a discourse or narrative item added to items of a related nature, *also, again, furthermore, thereupon*” The word is not necessarily totally changing subjects but introducing a slightly related subject—that is, the topics of binding and loosing covered in verses 18 and of agreeing together in verse 19 are technically different subjects, although they are slightly related.

Other examples of *palin* being used to change subjects are Matthew 5:32-33 and 2 Corinthians 11:15-16.

18:18. See note on Matthew 16:19.

18:22. Forgiveness: “77” or “70 times 7?”

^{KJV} **Matthew 18:21** Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? ²² Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

^{NIV} **Matthew 18:21** Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" ²² Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

As you can see, English versions differ as to whether Jesus said “77” or “70 times 7.” Although the Greek reads in a way that means seventy times seven in regular Greek, Matthew 18:22 may not be “regular” Greek. The Greek in Matthew 18:22 is the exact wording of the Septuagint (LXX) of Genesis 4:24, where Lamech is bragging to his wives about the vengeance he will take on his enemies: “77” times. The Hebrew text of Genesis 4:24 is very clear: 77 times, and very noted linguists assert that the accepted translation of the LXX came into Greek usage such that what in classical Greek meant “70 times 7,” in this biblical context of revenge and forgiveness it meant “77.” If this is the case, Jesus was contrasting the vengeful Lamech, who stated he would avenge himself “77 times” with the behavior of a godly person, who should forgive “77 times.” If the illusion is to Lamech, it forces us to be forgiving, but also to face the end of our forgiving. Will we act like the vengeful Lamech, willing to take vengeance on those we will not forgive?

Scholars who assert that the number should be “70 times 7” play down the association with Lamech and assert that the standard reading of the Greek should apply here. Some argue that “77 times” is not enough, and that the larger figure, 70 times 7, is a *hyperbole* (exaggeration), which was common in oriental thought. In that case, the hyperbole would be simply making the point that all the forgiving we can do is not enough—we must keep on forgiving.

Michael Hall (unpublished manuscript) pointed out that there were 70 periods of 7 in Daniel 9:24, from the going forth of the commandment to restore Jerusalem until the Messiah came and set up the Millennial Kingdom. Thus, he suggested that “70 times 7” was a veiled way of saying, “until the Millennial Kingdom.” If that is the case, then Jesus told us to forgive and forgive until this age of sin is over and he sets up his kingdom on earth. Mitigating against that idea are the number of scriptures showing that sin and forgiveness will still be necessary in the Messianic Age. Although Christ will reign, he will rule with a rod of iron, and although he, and the judges he appoints, will judge justly, they will still have to “settle disputes for many peoples” (Isa. 2:4). Furthermore, the existence of the Temple and the sin offering (Ezek. 43:19ff) show that mankind will still make mistakes and need forgiveness.

There is a good reason why scholars are in profound disagreement about this verse: the real meaning is not clear. If we had the original Hebrew or Aramaic that Jesus was speaking we could be sure, but we do not have them. It could also be argued that

Jesus knowingly used a number that was unclear, driving us to both conclusions at the same time: by hyperbole, we should always forgive people, and by comparison, when we refuse to forgive any more, we become like ungodly Lamech who boasted of his revenge. However, there is no way to know that either.

18:24. “ten thousand talents.” Different cultures had different talents, but most scholars believe Christ would have been referring to the Attic talent, which was equal to 6,000 denari, or 6,000 days wages (one denari was a days wage for a field hand or a soldier). To arrive at an idea of how much money is being referred to, if a field hand made \$7 per hour (\$56 per day), then one talent was \$336,000, and 10,000 talents was \$3,360,000,000 dollars, a ridiculously huge sum. According to Josephus, the total taxes that Judea, Samaria and Idumea made to imperial Rome was only 600 talents a year. The figure is meant to make the point that no one can ever actually pay off their debt to God. Another way of looking at the debt would be that a minimum wage worker would have to work 6,000 days X 10,000 talents, or 60 million days to work off the debt. Even if a person had a working life of 100 years and never took even one day off, that would only be 36,000 days. At the time of Christ the average lifespan for a woman was in the early 30’s and for men it was their late 30’s. Since a person usually only worked about 300 days per year, if a boy started to work at 12 and worked to 50, he would work less than 12,000 days in his life, not even getting a good start on the sixty million days he would have to work to pay his debt.

18:25. Slave owners were under no obligation to keep families together, and it was common for slave families to be separated by being sold one by one to others, although sometimes more compassionate owners tried to keep families together. This was at least as true in Rome as in Israel and the other countries of the East. Furthermore, people sometimes even sold their own children to pay their debt (Nehemiah 5:5).

18:28. “one hundred denarii” = one hundred days wages, which, by the figures given for v. 24 above, would be \$5,600. Not a small sum, but infinitesimal compared to the 10,000 talents.

19:5. Quoted from Gen. 2:24, occurs again in Mark 10:7.

“be glued to.” The Greek word is *kollaō* (#2853 κολλάω), and Thayer’s Lexicon says, “properly, *to glue, glue to, glue together, cement, fasten together*; hence universally, *to join or fasten firmly together*; in the N. T. only the passive is found....”

19:7. Quoted from Deut. 24:1.

19:16. “And Behold!, one came to him and said...” The “Behold!” in this verse is important, because it shows that it was considered remarkable that someone (especially someone well off) would come to Jesus and ask how to have everlasting life. How many people actually seek everlasting life?

19:18, 19. Quoted from Exod. 20:12-16 and Lev. 19:18.

19:27. “...so then what will we have?” Peter’s question is a good one, and one that all of us should be asking more. All of us are either like the rich man in verses 16-22 who hold on to worldly things and lose out on heavenly things, or we are like Peter who has “left everything” and will have great reward in the kingdom.

20:20. “bowing down.” See note on Matt. 2:2.

21:5. Quoted from Isaiah 62:11 and Zech. 9:9

21:9. Quoted from Ps. 118:25, 26.

21:13. Quoted from Isaiah 56:7 and Jer.7:11.

21:16. Quoted from Ps. 8:2.

21:19. “a lone fig tree by the path.” This is an important addition, because it tells us that the fig tree was not owned by anyone, but was public property. Jesus did not destroy private property.

21:29. “changed his mind.” The Greek is *metamelomai* (#3338 μεταμέλομαι); but it is sometimes spelled with two “L”s and it has two distinct meanings in the NT: 1) to change one’s mind; and to regret; be ashamed over; feel remorse for, or 2) to reproach oneself for what one has done. It occurs five times in the NT: Matt. 21:9, 32; 27:3; 2 Cor. 7:8; Hebrews 7:21.

21:42. Quoted from Ps. 118:22, 23.

22:15. “eagerly desired” The Greek is the figure of speech polyptoton, and reads, “with desire I have desired,” meaning with great desire, or eagerly desired.

22:24. Quoted from Deut. 25:5.

22:25. The Sadducees cite this as if it were a real case, and it probably was. Jesus did not try to refute their example. If there was one woman married to two brothers, that would have been good enough to make their case, but the Sadducees had a more involved example, so they used it.

22:29. “You err.” You are mistaken. Lenski asserts that the verb may be taken in a middle sense, “you are deceiving yourselves,” and he may be right.

“not having known the scriptures.” The Sadducees were misusing Moses’ teaching on what came to be called the “Levirate Law,” that if a man died, his brother would marry the widow and have children by her to preserve the name of the brother (Deut. 25:5-10). There is no reason to assume conditions on earth in the resurrection will be the same as they are in this life. Moses certainly did not teach that they were, so the Sadducees were taking a liberty with the text that had no foundation in truth. Furthermore, the Scriptures clearly teach a resurrection from the dead (see verse 32). Even though the Sadducees only take the Torah (Genesis-Deut.) as authoritative, there is certainly an afterlife implied in the Torah. Abraham believed God would raise Isaac from the dead, for example. Moses knew there was a book of life (Exod. 32:32). Furthermore, Job, who lived around the time of Abraham, certainly knew about it (Job 19:25:ff). Besides, the Sadducees were in error in rejecting the Word of God spoken through the prophets, saying it was not Scripture.

“nor the power of God.” In denying the resurrection from the dead, the Sadducees denied the power of God. Furthermore, God is not only able to raise dead people to the state they were before, i.e., living, it is in His power to raise them such that they will be different from how they were on earth. On earth, we have a need for children and families, but that may not be the case in the next life. Our fleshly bodies will change. “...the doctrine of the future state was there [in the Scripture], and the Sadducees should have believed it as it was, and not have added the absurd doctrine to it that men must live there as they do here. The way in which the enemies of the truth often attempt to make a doctrine of the Bible ridiculous is by adding to it, and then calling it absurd” (Barnes’ Notes; verse 29.)

22:30. “neither marry, nor are given in marriage.” This phrase exactly represents the biblical culture. Men marry, while women are “given in marriage.”

“but are as the angels in heaven.” The assumption is that angels do not marry and have families. That will be the case with us in the next life. There are some important

things to pay attention to in this verse. One is that Jesus said we will be like the angels, not that we become angels. There are people who believe when a believer dies, he or she goes to heaven and becomes an angel. That is not the case. The context of this section is marriage, and when it comes to marriage, resurrected believers will be like angels in that they do not marry.

Also, this verse comes as close as any to addressing the question about whether or not there will be sexual intercourse in the next life, but it does not settle the issue completely. It is possible but unlikely that angels have sexual intercourse. There is no indication in Scripture that angels participate in sexual intercourse with each other. The most likely case is that human sexual drive was given by God to insure the future of the race, and that there will be no sexual drive in our new bodies. Without any sexual drive or desire, there would be little point to sexual intercourse. It is true that sexual intercourse is exciting and fulfilling here on earth, but again, that is most likely the design of God so that the race could continue.

22:32. Quoted from Exod. 3:6. Jesus uses this verse to show that the Torah teaches a resurrection from the dead. God did not say that He “had been” the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but rather that he was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That is, that he was still their God, and would actively be so when they were raised from the dead. Some would say that the present tense of the verb proves that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were alive in heaven at that time (and now), but the context is clearly “the resurrection,” (used four times in the context: verses 23, 27, 30, and 31).

22:37. Quoted from Deut. 6:5.

22:39. Quoted from Lev. 19:18.

22:44. Quoted from Ps. 110:1.

23:6. “like.” The Greek is *phileō* (#5368 φιλέω). See note on John 21:15.

23:15. Gehenna: see note on Matt. 5:22.

23:33. Gehenna: see note on Matt. 5:22.

23:39. Quoted from Ps. 118:26.

24:1. Properly understanding this verse requires an understanding of the Temple complex during the time of Jesus. The “Temple” in this verse is the Temple proper, into which only Jews were allowed to enter. Once a person left the Temple, he was in the Temple courts. The courts were an approximately 40 acre area enclosed by walls. On the south end were tall buildings that were used as marketplaces, etc. On the north end was the Antonia Fortress, the Roman fortress that allowed the Romans to control mobs in the Temple (Cp. Acts 21:34 etc. “castle” KJV). Jesus left the “Temple,” the Temple proper, but in doing so was in the presence of the huge buildings on the south end of the Temple Mount enclosure. The disciples were “wowed” by the buildings, and pointed them out to Jesus. True to Jesus’ teaching, there is now not one single stone of those buildings left standing.

24:5. “Messiah.” The Greek is *christos*, which is usually translated “Christ.” However, the word means “anointed” or “messiah”; we translated the meaning of the word here and said “Messiah” rather than “Christ,” because these false messiahs may not actually be claiming to be Jesus himself, but only claiming to be the messiah.

24:9. “tortured.” The Greek is *thlipsis* (#2347 θλίψις), and it refers to outward trouble that inflicts distress; oppression; affliction; tribulation; and also the inward experience of distress, affliction, or trouble (BDAG). It was common practice to torture prisoners in the

first century, and in this case the fact that believers would be handed over to *thlipsis* clearly means torture. Two thousand years after Matthew was written, we humans have not become any more civilized, and torture is common practice all over the world. It will be even worse after the Rapture, which is why Revelation 14:13 says that those who die in the Lord (i.e., without remaining unconverted or renouncing their faith) will be blessed.

24:14. This verse is omitted in the earliest and best Greek text of the Western, Alexandrian, and Caesarean text families, and when it is included in Greek texts, different texts have it in different places, a clear indication it was added as a harmonization from Mark 12:40 or Luke 20:47.

24:15. “Holy Place” is a designation of the Temple. Quoted from Dan. 11:31. “Place” is the Greek *topos* (5117 τόπος) – The word “place” can refer to any place specifically mentioned, however, it was also one of the designations of the Temple in Jerusalem. Matt. 24:15; John 4:20, 11:48, 19:20; Acts 6:31,14, 21:28 See *Secrets of Golgotha* by Earnest Martin.

24:23. “Messiah.” See note on 24:5.

24:24. “Messiahs.” See note on 24:5.

24:26. “inner rooms.” A reference to the inner rooms of the Temple. It would have been a sin for an ordinary Israelite to enter into the Holy Place or the Holy of Holies of the Temple, so it was safe to say the Messiah was in there when no one would check to see if the report was true.

24:29. Quoted from Isa. 13:10

24:30. Quoted from Dan. 7:13.

24:31. Quoted from Deut. 30:4.

24:43. “allowed” = *eao* (1439) = “1. to let, allow, permit; 2. to let alone, to allow to do as one wishes; 3. to let go, give up, leave.” The difference between “let,” “allow,” and “permit” can be very slight, but “allow” usually means no more than lack of prohibition whereas “permit” implies a granting of express permission. Thus “allow” was usually the better choice for *eao* in this verse.

“dug through.” Biblical custom. Most houses were of some mud or mud and stone construction, so thieves “dug through” the wall and gained entrance to the house.

25:31. “glorious throne.” This is an example of the Figure of Speech Antimerieia (of the noun in regimen for an adjective. Bullinger, *Figures*). The Greek literally reads “a throne of his glory.” “Glory” is moved by antimereia from an adjective to a noun to give it more emphasis. Unfortunately, in English, it makes the sentence hard to understand, so using the simple adjective makes sense.

26:28. “covenant.” See note on Hebrews 7:22.

The word “new” is not included, as it is in the KJV. It was added to some texts such that this verse mirrored Luke 22:20 more closely. Had “new” been original, there is no good reason for dropping it from the early texts.

26:31. Quoted from Zech. 13:7.

26:45. The verse can be translated with a statement, i.e., “sleep on now...” or with a question, “Are you still sleeping...?” Commentators are divided, but most of them agree that, since Christ said very shortly after that, “Rise and let us go” that if Christ did in fact make a statement, then it is irony, not a serious statement. We have decided to translate the verse as a question given the following:

- A) The words can legitimately be translated as a question.
- B) Irony is hard to detect in a book and usually confuses the reader.
- C) Christ obviously did not mean for them to sleep since he spoke to them (if they were sleeping and he wanted them to continue sleeping, he would not have woken them up just to tell them to sleep on) and since he told them to get up in the very next verse.

26:47. “clubs” The KJV has staves, but the Greek just reads “woods” leaving the reader to figure out what the people were carrying that was made of wood. Since many people carried staffs, it would be natural to say that, but staffs were hard to fight with in a crowd and the association of this weapon with swords makes “clubs” the more likely choice.

26:64. Quoted from Ps. 110:1.

“Yes, you have said it.” See Matthew 27:11 note on “*It is as you say.*”

26:69. “servant-girl.” The Greek word can be either “slave-girl” or “servant-girl.” The context determines which. This girl (and the ones in Mark 14:66, 69; Luke 22:56; Acts 12:13, may have been slave-girls, but there the context does not give enough weight to go in that direction.

27:5. “he hanged himself.” Refer to commentary entry on Acts 1:18.

27:9. “spoken.” Not “written,” either by Jeremiah or Zechariah, but “spoken” by Jeremiah. See Bullinger’s note in *The Companion Bible*. These words are found in Zechariah 11:12, 13 with allusions to Jeremiah 18:1-4; 19:1-3. They are ascribed to Jeremiah since, in Jesus’ day, the books of the prophets were headed by Jeremiah, not Isaiah as now, and the quotation is identified by the name of the first book of the group, rather than by the name of the specific book within the group. Similarly in Luke 24:44, “Psalms” includes all the books known as the writings because it is the first book of the group. See note in *The Ryrie Study Bible*.

27:11. “*It is as you say.*” Jesus answers Pilate’s question in the affirmative, that he is a king. It is important to translate this verse in the affirmative. Jesus was not playing word games with Pilate, giving him an ambiguous answer. Pilate’s everlasting life was at stake, and Pilate, like everyone else, had to have a chance to believe and accept Jesus as Messiah. This should not be considered unusual. Jesus had told many others he was the Messiah (Matt. 16:16-20; Mark 14:62; John 4:26; 10:24-25); besides that, the conversation between Pilate and Jesus was not as short as Matthew, Mark (15:2-5), or Luke (23:3) records. The Gospel of John records the longer conversation (John 18:33-38; 19:9-11). In this longer conversation, Jesus tells Pilate that although he is a king, “My kingdom is not of this world” and “my kingdom is from another place” (John 18:36), and “Everyone on the side of truth listens to me” (John 18:37). Of course Pilate, being a Roman and believing in the Roman gods, if he believed anything at all, did not have a clear and accurate picture of God, the afterlife, the Messianic Age, or anything that would have given true meaning to what Jesus said. To Pilate, Jesus’ words were likely nonsense, and he responded with “What is truth?” (John 18:38). One thing Pilate did get from his conversation with Jesus was that he was not a threat to Rome in the sense that he was trying to foment rebellion and overthrow Roman rule. That is what the religious leaders were accusing Jesus of, so that Pilate would crucify him, but Pilate, after questioning Jesus, was satisfied that was not the case, and came to the religious leaders and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him” (John 19:6).

Many excellent Greek scholars attest to the fact that Jesus' answer to Pilate, "It is as you say," was not an ambiguous statement. A. T. Robertson correctly states, "By his answer (thou sayest) Jesus confesses that he is" (Robertson, *Word Pictures*). *The Expositor's Greek Testament* by W. R. Nicoll simply says that Jesus' answer "= yes." R. C. H. Lenski says this about Jesus' answer: "It is the regular way of affirming the contents of the question." Albert Barnes, in Barnes's Notes, says, "Thou sayest." [KJV] That is, thou sayest right, or thou sayest the truth. ... Though he acknowledge that he was the king yet he stated fully that his kingdom was not of this world, and that therefore it could not be alleged against him as treason against the Roman emperor." Further evidence that this was an affirmative statement comes from Matthew 26:64 and Mark 14:62 (Robertson, *Word Pictures*). In these are two parallel records the high priest asks Jesus if he was the Messiah. Matthew records that the Lord answered, "You have said it" (*su eipas*); but Mark reports the answer with the clear affirmative, "I am" (*ego eimi*). This interchangeability of the two statements demonstrates that the idiom was confirmatory. (Cp. Matt 26:64; 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 22:70; 23:3; John 18:37).

27:20. "persuaded" = *peitho* = to persuade, have confidence in. The Word Study Dictionary by Zodhiates does a very good job defining this word. It sometimes gets translated "trust" but we have stayed away from that translation and stayed with "confidence." It also gets translated "obey," but that is not technically correct, and especially in Hebrews 13:17 ("obey your leaders") it gets misused. We have left it "obey" in James 3:3, because although the horses bit does allow us to persuade them, "obey" is more understandable in the context.

27:29. "mocked." The Greek word translated "mocked" is *empaizō* (#1702 ἐμπαίζω), and means "mock," "make fun of," "ridicule." In some contexts it has a second meaning, that of outwitting someone in a way that makes a fool of the person; to trick; to deceive; (Matt. 2:16). The "mocking" can be simply verbal, or it can be physical as well, and thus it can be categorized as physical abuse. It is used that way in the Septuagint (Judg. 16:25, 1 Sam. 31:4, Prov. 23:35). *Empaizō* is also used euphemistically for rape (Gen. 39:14, 17; Judg. 19:25; 20:5), which has caused some people to speculate that during his torture Jesus was raped by one or more of the Roman soldiers. Although homosexuality and bisexuality were common in the Roman world, the context of "mock" in the NT seems to exclude rape. For one thing, *empaizō* is used of Jesus being mocked when he was in public settings and even when he was on the cross (Luke 22:63; 23:36). He was also mocked in Herod's presence but certainly not likely raped right there in the public of Herod's court (Luke 23:11).

The times Jesus is recorded as being "mocked" when he was alone with the soldiers also seem to exclude him being raped. Both records, Matthew 27:29-31 and Mark 15:17-20, show that the soldiers put royal clothes on Jesus, then mocked him, then removed those clothes. That the clothes were removed after he was "mocked" certainly seems to exclude rape as part of the mocking. Jesus went through terrible and prolonged verbal and physical abuse between the time he was arrested and the time he died on the cross, and that included being mocked in many different settings by many different people. Sadly, Jesus still suffers physical abuse via his Body, the Church, which is persecuted for his name. Nevertheless, there will come a day when that will stop, and every knee will bow before him.

27:46. Quoted from Ps. 22:1.

27:50. “spirit.” The Greek word is *pneuma* (#4151 πνεῦμα). Here it refers to the natural life of the body. See note on Luke 23:46.

27:52. Matthew 27:51b-53 has caught the attention of readers for centuries because of the notable miracle that those verses describe. These verses occur immediately after the death of Jesus recorded earlier in the chapter. We do not believe it was in the original text. This record of the earthquake, the rocks being split, the graves being opened and the dead being raised occurs only in Matthew, and it contains some apparent inconsistencies.

There are no manuscripts of Matthew that omit these verses. This means that if these verses are an addition or contain added material, it would have had to have been done very early, no later than the first part of the second century. Although it is very unusual to have an addition to the text present in every extant manuscript, it has been known to happen, and interestingly enough, in Matthew.²

The patristic literature also indicates that these verses are original. “Patristic” comes from the Latin word for “father,” which is “*pater*.” So the word “patristic” is used by scholars for the writings of the early theologians, who are known as “the Church Fathers.” When the Church Fathers quote Matthew 27 as a body of text, the part about the dead being raised is also quoted. It is interesting that there are times when it would seem natural for those early theologians to refer to these events, when in fact they do not mention them, but it is always dangerous to argue from silence. So, the textual and patristic evidence shows us that if Matthew 27:52 and 53 were an addition, it is a very early one.

In spite of the textual evidence indicating that Matthew 27:52 and 53 are original, there are some very disturbing things about these verses. First and foremost is that if “many” of the Old Testament saints arose and went to Jerusalem, why are they not mentioned anywhere else? In fact, the entire event is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible. This seems quite incredible if it actually occurred. Are we to believe that “many” Old Testament saints such as Joshua, Josiah or Jeremiah got up from the dead and entered Jerusalem, but never joined the apostles? When Lazarus was raised from the dead, he rejoined Jesus and the apostles. The traditional answer to that question is that when the saints got up from the dead they were in their glorified bodies and at some point, perhaps very shortly after witnessing in Jerusalem, they ascended up into heaven. Thus they would not have been around for the events in Acts. However, that cannot be, because Scripture is very clear that Jesus is the “firstfruits from the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

Jesus is the very first person to be raised from the dead unto everlasting life. The Old Testament and Gospels have records of people being raised from the dead, but all those people were raised in their normal bodies and died again. They were not raised to everlasting life because Christ had not yet been raised from the dead. The “many holy people” Matthew refers to as being raised were raised when Jesus died, and not after his resurrection, and that is a big problem. Some Bible teachers say that the phrase, “after his resurrection,” in verse 53 refers to the entire event, and that the dead were not raised until after Jesus’ resurrection. However, this is not the reading of the Greek text. The raising from the dead is

² It seems very clear that “in my name” was changed to “in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” in Matthew 28:19 (M. Graeser, J. Lynn, J. Schoenheit, *One God & One Lord* (Christian Educational Services, Indianapolis, IN, 1999) p. 448).

clearly set at the time of the death of Christ. Thus if they were raised, they could not have been raised with everlasting bodies.

Other theologians point out that these “holy ones” did not enter Jerusalem until after the resurrection, but that really misses the point. If someone was raised from the dead with a glorified and everlasting body before Jesus was, then that person would have been the “firstfruits from the dead,” and not Jesus. If these saints spent three days near their tombs, this in itself is a problem, because these verses seem to have a chronological inconsistency. What would be the point in raising them from the dead just to have them stay near their tombs, and then appear in Jerusalem three days later? If God got them up to be witnesses, would they not begin witnessing immediately?

Another verse that would contradict a theory that Old Testament believers got up from the dead in their new and everlasting bodies, and then shortly ascend to heaven, is that John 3:13 affirms that when the book of John was written (perhaps 80-90 AD), no one was in heaven but Jesus.

John 3:13 (KJV)

And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, *even* the Son of man which is in heaven.

Although most modern versions of John 3:13 have the shorter version, omitting the last phrase about Jesus being in heaven, it is our belief that it is original, and part of the narration of John, not part of Jesus’ speech to Nicodemus.³ If no one was in heaven except Jesus by the time the Gospel of John was written, then there is no way that those Old Testament believers could have gotten up unto everlasting life, because there is no way they could have (or would have) been alive throughout the entire period covered by the Book of Acts and not been mentioned or had a noticeable impact.

Even assuming that these Old Testament believers got up from the dead in their fleshly bodies, only to die again shortly afterwards, presents some serious problems. There is the chronological question as to why they stayed by their tombs for three days, and did not enter Jerusalem until “after the resurrection.” Also, the lack of biblical evidence that they had risen is a major problem. Did no one notice them for three full days? That would be very unlikely. Also, why did they not get word to the apostles who were living in fear during those same three days (John 20:19)? Furthermore, where were they when the apostles were first hearing about the resurrection? Evidence for the resurrection was coming to the Apostles from many places. Peter and John went to the empty tomb, but were not convinced of Jesus’ resurrection (John 20:3-10). Mary Magdalene told them she had seen Jesus, but they still did not believe (Mark 16:9-11). Later Mary and all the women told the disciples about the angel at the tomb who said Christ was raised, but they still did not believe (Luke 24:1-11). Since Jesus’ tomb was outside the city and there were many tombs all over that whole area, would not some of the disciples have encountered a few of these risen saints? That seems logical, especially since “they appeared to many people.” Are to we really believe that none of those “many people” were disciples or would have gotten word to the disciples? Then Jesus appeared to two disciples as they walked to Emmaus. Those two traveled back to Jerusalem and

³ See The Companion Bible by E. W. Bullinger on John 3:13 and its context.

told the disciples about it (Luke 24:13-35), and it was while they were all talking that Jesus appeared in the room with them. By that time it was Sunday evening (John 20:19). It seems impossible that “many” Old Testament saints had been raised for three days and had begun to enter the city of Jerusalem.

Another problem is where were these “many saints” on the Day of Pentecost, only 50 days later? The number of disciples was specifically given at about 120. That is not a large number considering the many lives that Jesus touched. It does not seem possible that the 120 believers were both those who had followed Jesus and those saints who were raised from the dead. When Peter met with them to choose a successor to Judas, would not a risen saint be a great potential leader? Yet nothing is said about them at all.

There is no evidence that any of these “many saints” joined the disciples, yet what else would they do? Where would they go? All of their families were long dead and they would not have had any jobs, food, money, or places to stay. Furthermore, there is no evidence that they convinced any of the unbelievers. The crowds on Pentecost, and the religious leaders, seem to have never heard of them. Thus it certainly seems they would have joined the disciples for support.

Furthermore, on the day of Pentecost, Peter assures the crowds that David died and was buried, and his tomb was still known (David’s body, 1000 years old, would have been decayed and gone). Had David just been resurrected and walking around Jerusalem witnessing, it seems certain that Peter would have mentioned that fact, and not said that he was dead. Of course, David might have been one saint that God did not raise. But if there were Old Testament believers walking around Jerusalem, that certainly weakens Peter’s argument that Jesus is the firstborn from the dead. It would be logical for someone in the crowd at Pentecost to ask why Peter was saying Jesus was the first one up from the dead if there were “many” believers up before him.

Also, the unbelievers and the critics of the apostles never mentioned these resurrected believers. The religious leaders of Jerusalem, for example, accused the apostles, saying, “...you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching (Acts 5:28). Surely, if even a few Old Testament believers were also in Jerusalem and had appeared “to many,” the religious leaders would have been concerned about that also, yet there is no mention that anyone else was spreading the teaching of Christ’s resurrection.

Another problem with these verses is that they break the flow of events in Matthew. Matthew records that at the time of Christ’s death there was an earthquake, rocks split, and the curtain of the Temple was torn (v. 51). Then verse 54 says that when the centurion and those guarding Jesus “saw” the things that happened, they exclaimed that Jesus was the Son of God. We believe that Jesus was crucified on the top of the Mt. of Olives (*The Place of Christ’s Crucifixion* by Earnest Martin), and that the centurion and the others could have indeed seen the Temple curtain rip and the earthquake and rocks split. Thus, without verses 52 and 53, Matthew 27: 51 and 54 read smoothly and is possible. But when verses 52 and 53 are added, then the centurion and guards could not have seen “all that had happened” (v. 54), because there is no way they could have seen many bodies come out of tombs all around the area. Thus the addition of verses 52 and 53 add a contradiction to the text.

The problems mentioned above are not the only difficulty with these verses in Matthew. The vocabulary in the verses seems unique to this section of Scripture even though it can be anchored in other biblical texts. We will look at two words in the order

they appear in the verse: “bodies,” and “resurrection.” Verse 52 says that many “bodies” of the holy people arose. At first this seems unusual because the vast majority of the time it is the “people” who arise, not just the body. It was Lazarus who came out of the tomb, not Lazarus’ body. Thus this vocabulary of the “body” usually was used in later debates when Gnostics and Neoplatonists were bringing into Christianity their ideas about the soul living on after death, and saying that only the body would need to get up because the soul would return to it from heaven, where it had been since the death of the body. It is true that Isaiah 26:19 says that in the future the dead bodies will arise, and Romans 8:11 mentions life being given to our “mortal bodies.” However, the fact that “bodies” is used in Matthew 27:52 is unusual and makes it suspect.

The most unusual word in Matthew 27:53 is “resurrection.” The Greek word is *egerais*, and this is the only time it is used in the New Testament. Indeed, it is used only once in the Greek Old Testament, and that was not about getting up from the dead, but arising from sleep. “You know when I sit and when I rise” (Ps. 139:2). The word means “a waking up as from sleep, a rousing or rising up.” As far as all other extant Greek literature is concerned, *egerais*, was not used of raising from the dead until the Church Father, Irenaeus.⁴ Several scenarios are possible: by the time Matthew wrote, Christians were using “*egerais*” to refer to the resurrection because it can mean a waking from sleep, and Matthew used it that way. Or Matthew may have been the first to use it that way and the concept spread in Christianity. What we believe is the case, however, is that this verse was written a little later than the Gospel of Matthew and then imported into it. Although there is no “absolute proof” that Matthew would not have used the word, it is very unusual that its only occurrence in the entire New Testament is in this one difficult section.

The contextual evidence, and the scope of Scripture give good evidence for believing that Matthew 27: 52 and 53 were added to the text. However, there is really no honest way to absolutely exclude these verses from the text. They are not missing in any of the texts of this section of Matthew. They are referred to by many Church Fathers and, lastly, although the vocabulary is not common, it does not demand that the section be considered a later addition to the text. We can conclude that if Old Testament believers were raised, they were not raised to everlasting life because then Jesus would not be the firstfruits from the dead. It is possible that they were raised and then died again in a few weeks or months. But as we have seen, it is unlikely, due to a lack of supporting evidence.

27:62. “were gathered.” Passive voice. The spiritual and social forces were powerfully at work, exerting an influence. It is as if an invisible hand rounded up these religious leaders.

27:63. “will be raised.” Passive voice. The religious leaders remembered, but did not believe, what the disciples never grasped—that Jesus taught he would be raised after three days.

28:1. for the translation “dusk” see Robertson’s Word Pictures.

⁴ Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1964), vol. 2, p. 337 and *The Way Magazine*, “Early Patristic Evidence for the Forgery of Matthew 27:52b and 53,” by Dr. Dan McConaughy (American Christian Press, PO Box 328, New Knoxville, OH 45871. May-June 1982), *GMIR* section.

28:7. Prophetic perfect: “having gone” past for present or future (see note on “seated,” in Ephesians 2:6).

28:9. “paid homage.” The act of grabbing the feet was an act of homage. See note on Matthew 2:2.

28:17. “bowed before *him*.” See note on Matt. 2:2. Most versions translated *proskuneo* as “worship” here, but that makes no sense. How can someone worship and doubt at the same time? They bowed (or fell down) before him, but even in doing that act of showing respect, some were doubting.

28:19. “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the holy spirit.” We have translated the text, according to the Greek manuscripts, to include “the Father, and the Son, and the holy spirit.” However, it is possible that this rendering is a very early interpolation, and the original reading was “in my name,” although it must be quickly admitted there is no Greek text which shows this to be the case. Nevertheless, the following points are worth consideration:

1). It is strange that there is not a single occurrence of the disciples baptizing anyone according to this formula. All the records in the New Testament show that people were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. In other words, the “name of Jesus Christ,” *i.e.*, all that he represents, is the element, or substance, into which people were figuratively “baptized.” “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the **name** of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins’ “ (Acts 2:38). “They had simply been baptized into the **name** of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:16). “So he ordered that they be baptized in the **name** of Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:48). “On hearing this, they were baptized into the **name** of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5). We cannot imagine any reason for the Apostles and others in Acts to disobey a command of the risen Christ. To us, it seems clear that Christ could have said to baptize in his name, which was what the early Church did.

2). Eusebius (c. 260--c. 340) was the Bishop of Caesarea and is known as “the Father of Church History.” Although he wrote prolifically, his most celebrated work is his *Ecclesiastical History*, a history of the Church from the Apostolic period until his own time. Today it is still the principle work on the history of the church at that time. Eusebius quotes many verses in his writings, and Matthew 28:19 is one of them. He never quotes it as it appears today in modern Bibles, but always finishes the verse with the words “in my name.” For example, in Book III of his *History*, Chapter 5, Section 2, which is about the Jewish persecution of early Christians, we read,

“But the rest of the apostles, who had been incessantly plotted against with a view to their destruction, and had been driven out of the land of Judea, went unto all nations to preach the Gospel, relying upon the power of Christ, who had said to them, ‘Go ye and make disciples of all the nations **in my name**.’”

Again, in his *Oration in Praise of Emperor Constantine*, Chapter 16, Section 8, we read,

“What king or prince in any age of the world, what philosopher, legislator or prophet, in civilized or barbarous lands, has attained so great a height of excellence, I say not after death, but while living still, and full of mighty power, as to fill the ears and tongues of all mankind with the praises of his name? Surely none save our only Savior has done this, when, after his victory over death, he spoke the word to his followers, and fulfilled it by

the event, saying to them, ‘Go ye and make disciples of all nations **in my name.**’”

Eusebius was present at the council of Nicaea, and involved in the debates about Arian teaching and whether Christ was God or a creation of God. We feel confident that if the manuscripts he had in front of him read “in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” he would never have quoted it as “in my name.” Thus, we believe that the earliest manuscripts read “in my name,” and that the phrase was enlarged to reflect the orthodox position as Trinitarian influence spread.

3). The reason people would be offended by the translation in the REV is that they might think that it is doing away with the Trinity. However, this verse does not prove the Trinity. If the Father, Son and holy spirit are mentioned in the original text of this verse, it would only affirm that those three exist, something we do not contest. The doctrine of the Trinity states that the Father, Son and “Holy Spirit” together make “one God.” This verse refers to three, but never says they are “one.” The three things this verse refers to are: God the Father, the Lord Jesus and the power of holy spirit. (We say “holy spirit” instead of “Holy Spirit” because we believe that this verse is referring to God’s gift of holy spirit that is born inside each believer. It is lower case because it refers to the gift of God, and not God. For more on this, see Graeser, Lynn, Schoenheit, *The Gift of Holy Spirit: The Power to be like Christ*.)

4). It is sometimes stated that in order to be baptized into something, that something has to be God, but that reasoning is false, because Scripture states that the Israelites were “baptized into Moses” (1 Cor. 10:2).

5). “name” A study of the culture and language shows that the word “name” stood for “authority.” Examples are very numerous, but space allows only a small selection. Deuteronomy 18:5 and 7 speak of serving in the “name” (authority) of the Lord. Deuteronomy 18:22 speaks of prophesying in the “name” (authority) of the Lord. In 1 Samuel 17:45, David attacked Goliath in the “name” (authority) of the Lord, and he blessed the people in the “name” (authority) of the Lord. In 2 Kings 2:24, Elisha cursed troublemakers in the “name” (authority) of the Lord. These scriptures are only a small sample, but they are very clear.

6). In reading the book of Matthew, we note that there is no presentation of the doctrine of the Trinity. Some prominent Trinitarians doubt that the apostles were even introduced to the doctrine until after they received holy spirit. It would be strange indeed for Christ to introduce the doctrine of baptism with the formula of the name of the Father, Son, and holy spirit without some presentation to the apostles as to why that should be. For more information as to why this verse does not support a Trinitarian position, see [One God and One Lord](#), Appendix A, note on Matthew 28:19.

