

SOME MORE TRICKY SCRIPTURES: PART 2

JAMIE MCNAB

30.11.24

Last time ... we looked at a number of well-known scriptures that are commonly misunderstood. Sometimes the translation can be a problem — but very often ... the scripture is simply misapplied (often due to ignoring the context).

We will look at a few more today.

Mark 12:41-44

41 **Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much.**

42 **Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites**, which make a quadrans.

43 **So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them,**

“Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury;

44 for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.”

I've been at the receiving end of many offertory sermonettes based on this passage.

The most common lessons given are:

- **Even if you're poor ... give it anyway!**
- **If you're reasonably comfortable financially — you could have given much more — and should have. You're guilty and should feel bad!**

Question. Should the widow have given all of her livelihood?

God may well be impressed with her attitude — but it was not necessary. In the Old Testament ... God had set up a comprehensive system to look after the vulnerable widows and orphans. **Some of God's strongest rebukes — curses — are against any who would exploit a widow.**

In context ... that is the problem Jesus is highlighting. The story begins in verse 38.

Mark 12:38-40

38 Then He said to them in His teaching, "**Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces,**

39 **the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts,** (*vain ... covetous people*)

40 **who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers.** These will receive greater condemnation."

Mark 12:40 (THE EXPANDED BIBLE)

40 But they cheat widows and steal their houses [devour widows' homes] and then try to make themselves look good by saying long prayers [in public]. They will receive a greater punishment [judgment; condemnation]."

Mark 12:38-40 (THE VOICE)

38 **Watch out for the scribes who act so religious**—who like to be seen in pious clothes and to be spoken to respectfully in the marketplace,

39 who take the best seats in the synagogues and the place of honor at every dinner,

40 **who spend widows' inheritances and pray long prayers to impress others.** These are the kind of people who will be condemned above all others.

Jesus is strongly warning His disciples about how dangerous the Scribes and Pharisees are (the entire chapter has recorded their attempts to trap Him!).

He has warned specifically that the Scribes and Pharisees devour widows' houses — and here's a concrete example right in front of them!

God doesn't require a poor widow's livelihood — but religious men might — and too often do.

So ... watch out if religious men attempt to use Mark 12:43-44 to pressure you to give.

Mark 12:43-44

43 So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, “**Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury;**

44 **for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.**”

And — RESPECT THE WIDOW.

Philippians 1:21

21 **For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.**

To die is gain? This verse appears on tee shirts ... jackets etc and are all available from Amazon or Etsy!

The general view is ... “when I die ... I’ll zoom off to Heaven and run up and down the streets of gold etc!”

In context ... was Paul just thinking of himself? Maybe a little selfish? No. Look at the wider context — and remember Paul is writing from prison. We’ll see Paul’s interest — 100% — is in seeing the Gospel preached — ever more effectively — in season ... out of season!!

Philippians 1:6-7

6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

7 **just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel,** you all are partakers with me of grace.

Paul is in chains — he has the Gospel on his mind.

Philippians 1:12-18

12 **But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to (being in jail) me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel,**

13 **so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;**

14 **and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.** (*This gave people more impetus to go out and preach the Gospel*)

15 Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill:

16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;

17 but the latter out of love, knowing that **I am appointed for the defence of the gospel.**

18 What then? **Only that in every way,** whether in pretense or in truth, **Christ is preached;** and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

Christ is being preached!! He is thinking about how the Gospel is fairing.

This is the uppermost thought in Paul's mind.

Philippians 1:21

21 **For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.**

To die is gain — for the Gospel!! Not selfishly ... for Paul.

Yet Paul knows it's probably better for the brethren that he remain alive and continues to preach in person.

Philippians 1:24-26

24 **Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.**

25 **And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith,**

26 **that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.**

The idea that "I'm living for Christ ... but know if I die I'm off to glory" is not Paul's thought at all.

He sees his death ... as a martyr ... as great testimony ... to catapult the Gospel forwards.

The next example:

Matthew 23:1-3

1 Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples,
2 saying: “**The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat.**
3 **Therefore whatever they tell you to observe**, that observe and do, **but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.** (*Is this a command?*)

Obey the Pharisees? Really?

I’ve come across this within the Church of God. Told that we keep the Passover on the wrong day. It should be 15th Nisan — like the Jews keep. This was the teaching of the Pharisees ... and Jesus said we should obey them? Also ... Pentecost should be Sivan 6 — as the Pharisees taught!

How could Jesus tell us to heed and obey the Pharisees? He didn’t!

Matthew 15:12-14

12 Then His disciples came and said to Him, “**Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?**”
13 But He answered and said, “**Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.** (*Talking about the Pharisees — God didn’t put them there!*)
14 **Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind.** And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.”

GOD DIDN’T PUT THEM THERE! LEAVE THEM ALONE!! THEY ARE BLIND!

Matthew 16:5-6

5 Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.
6 Then Jesus said to them, “**Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.**”

Matthew 16:11-12

11 How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to **beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**”

12 Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of **the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**

WATCH OUT!! 👁️ BEWARE OF THE PHARISEES' DOCTRINE!!

Matthew 23:13

13 “**But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For **you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men;** for **you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.**

Matthew 23:15

15 “**Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** For **you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.** (*Hell — Gehenna — where the wicked are destroyed*)

Matthew 23:16

16 “**Woe to you, blind guides,** who say, Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.’

Matthew 23:33

33 Serpents, brood of vipers! **How can you escape the condemnation of hell?**

JESUS ISN'T CONTRADICTING HIMSELF.

The translation problem is in verse 3.

The Greek sentence can be translated in two ways. (For Grammarians — either **imperative** (command tense) or **indicative** (declares or indicates what is happening ... what is taking place 😊))

To be consistent with Jesus' many warnings — it should be translated:

“WHATEVER THEY TELL YOU TO OBSERVE YOU ARE OBSERVING AND DOING — BUT **DO NOT DO ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS!”**

Maybe the translators liked the idea of members obeying their religious leaders?

Another example:

Exodus 12:5-8

5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats.

6 Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. (*Between the two evenings*)

7 And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it.

8 Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.

PASSOVER ON THE 14th — at the beginning.

The Jews don't believe that and certain Churches of God groups.

Exodus 12:11

11 And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover.

Eat it in haste? That may look “innocent”?

But it is used by the Jews and some in the Church of God and some Hebrew Roots groups ... to suggest that Israel was ready to leave Egypt almost immediately. Why else would they need to eat it in haste?

And since Israel left on 15th Nisan — **then** the Passover must be on 15th! (As the Pharisees also taught)

But — as we know — there was no haste!

The Israelites couldn't leave their homes until the morning (daybreak).

Exodus 12:22-23

22 And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. **And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning.**

23 **For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you.**

“And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning”.

Then they had all day to gather their belongings and assemble at Rameses before eventually leaving a full day after Passover.

Another translation problem (probably influenced by Jewish scholars).

The Hebrew word for “in haste” is **CHIPPAZON**. **Another meaning in dictionaries is: “in trepidation”.**

So ... eat the Passover in trepidation. In an attitude of fear.

(The destroyer is moving through the land. Many will die. What if you don't follow the instructions properly?)

Here is the use of the same word:

Deuteronomy 20:3-4

3 And he shall say to them, 'Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and **do not tremble** or be terrified because of them; ("*tremble*" — **HEBREW: CHIPPAZON**)

4 for the LORD your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.'

Exodus 12:11 is talking about the attitude Israel should have at Passover — not the manner of eating (gobbling it down hurriedly and suffering indigestion!)

It may not seem important ... but it is used by some to "prove" that Passover is 15th Nisan.

(There is a separate Hebrew word for "haste" — **MAHAR** — which appears over 65 times).

Sometimes ... the problem is punctuation. The translation itself is okay ... but the commas or full stops cause problems.

Think of the thief on the cross. What did Jesus promise?

Luke 23:39-43

39 Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us."

40 But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?"

41 And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong."

42 Then he said to Jesus, "**Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.**" (*The thief wants to be remembered in the Kingdom. That's 2,000 years future!*)

43 And Jesus said to him, "**Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.**"

We can punctuate:

"I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" ... **Or**

“I SAY TO YOU TODAY, YOU WILL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE”.

The Greek is identical. Where does the comma go?

Jesus was in “hell” — Hades — the grave — later that day (3 days and nights in total). So .. in context ... Jesus is confirming that even dying on the cross He can make great promises.

We see a similar punctuation problem:

In Mark 16:

Mark 16:1-2, 9

1 Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.

2 Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.

9 Now **when He rose, (the evening before Sunday) early on the first day of the week He appeared first to Mary Magdalene,** out of whom He had cast seven demons.

“When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene ...” **Or**

“WHEN JESUS ROSE, EARLY ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK HE APPEARED FIRST TO MARY MAGDALENE ...”

The traditional “Easter” view is that Jesus rose on Sunday morning. Hence the former punctuation.

However ... **if Jesus was placed in the tomb in late afternoon — then 3 days later He’d rise at the same time. So He was already risen BY Sunday morning.** Mark is simply recounting the occasions when the Resurrected Christ met people — first Mary Magdalene ... then 2 others in the country (verse 12) ... then ... later — the 11 Apostles (verse 14).

So ... if we're familiar with the full story of Jesus death ... burial ... and resurrection — and believe Jesus' promise of 3 days and 3 nights — we punctuate accurately.

With today's examples ... we can see that getting the broader context is one of the most important ways to get at the Truth!