

Revelation 22:14

Ray Givney

In my research on Bible Versions, it was only natural that I should examine the apparently tremendous difference between the KJV translation of Rev 22:14, (the first part), "Blessed are they that do his commandments,", and many of the Modern Versions such as the RSV, and the NIV, which say, "Blessed are those who wash their robes", - the rest of the verse being almost identical with the KJV. How can such a variation in a text be justified? The KJV discusses the blessings promised to the "keepers of God's Commandments", whilst the others don't even mention them, but refer to "the washing of robes".

It is obvious that the Translators have used different manuscripts. It is claimed by some scholars that the two manuscripts, "Sinaiticus" & "Vaticanus", are "older and more reliable", but other scholars who have just as many qualifications, and some of them more, no longer believe that to be true. Please take the time to read the Preface to the New King James Version, Bagster, 1982, page vii. the left hand col "... some scholars have reason to doubt their faithfulness to the autographs, since they often disagree with one another. Since the latter nineteenth century the theory has been held by some scholars that this traditional text of the New Testament had been officially edited by the fourth century church. Recent studies have caused significant changes in this view, and a growing number of scholars now regard the "Received Text" used in translating the KJV, as far more reliable than previously thought". The preface goes on to say that the translators of the NKJV, have presented their Translation based on "The Received Text".

One of the things that rang "danger bells" in my mind, was the fact that "Sinaiticus" was found in a rubbish tip at St. Catherine's Monastery, on Mt. Sinai, [hence the name], in 1844 by Tischendorf, a German Bible Critic, who had up to that time, published seven (7) New Testaments. The last one he had claimed to be the most perfect and reliable N/T available. When he found parts of a manuscript of the N/T at the monastery, (he kept returning till 1862) he published an eighth (8th) N/T. which had 3369 changes made to the "perfect N/T" that he had published previously. (from "Which Bible", edited by Otis Fuller, 1990, page 150). We will include some more background information on the translators.

In the latter half of the Nineteenth Century, there was a movement known as "The Oxford Movement", the members of which were very critical of the Bible. Many of this group did not believe in the story of Creation, the fall of man, the world-wide flood, Jonah and the fish, nor the Virgin Birth. This became known as "Higher Criticism". Yet their opinion of the Bible was very "low". However, these people still called themselves Christians.

Two members in particular, Hort and Westcott had a tremendous influence in the translation of the "Revised Version" of The Bible, published in 1881. They favoured the Manuscripts known as "Vaticanus" and "Sinaiticus", which were at that time considered to be older than the Manuscripts used in the translation of the KJV of 1611. These manuscripts also were considered to be more reliable, in spite of the obvious scribal errors, and changes made. BIBLE scholars involved in modern BIBLE Translations have largely followed the lead of these two men, and other Bible critics. By 1911, (the Tercentenary of the publishing of the KJV), it was taught by these critics, that there were 30,000 errors in the KJV. So the Bible Societies set a team of highly qualified scholars of "Hebrew, or Greek", or both, to investigate these claims. This team of scholars disallowed over 98% of the claimed errors. This meant that they allowed less than 2% of these claimed errors, which did not detract from the message of The Bible. Some say, "Does this different translation make much difference"? The usual answer is that "they're both Bibles aren't they"? If we go to the Scriptures and put in much time and effort, it can be proven

that “keeping God’s Commandments” & “Wash their robes”, both say much the same thing”. But how many people reading their “Revised Standard Version”, or “New International Version”, especially if they had not read the “King James Version”, or did not have a good memory, would know the difference anyway. And how many people would have the resources to investigate the matter? Can you see the danger?

To understand better, the term “washed their robes”, we must also investigate other texts, which use the same term, or refer to the same phrase. There is a story, which promises to be of help in Zechariah 3:3-7. “Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. [a Messenger from God]. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of The Lord stood by. And the angel of The Lord protested unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; (If) thou wilt walk in My ways, and (if) thou wilt keep My charge, then thou shalt also judge My house, and thou shalt also keep My courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by”.

Through His angel, God exchanged Joshua's “filthy garments” (the same Hebrew word “begeg” translated here as “garments”, has also be translated as “Robes”), (see 1 Kings 22:10) for clean garments, in verse 5, and then in verse 7, the last part, God made it very clear to Joshua that now that he had been “cleansed” - he had to “walk in God's ways, keep His charge”, etc. Which was much the same advice Jesus gave to the woman caught in adultery, “go, and sin no more”. Now that he was clean he had to stay clean, or God could not advance him in His cause.

Let us now compare these verses with Revelation 19:7, 8, “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of The Lamb is come, and HIS wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints”.

The bride of the Lamb in this case is the members of God's church (see 2 Corinthians 11:2). “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused [married] you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ”. Jeremiah 3:14, “Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you;”. From (Revelation 19:7, 8), we learn that the bride of Christ must be clothed in “fine linen clean and white”, which is “the righteousness of saints”.

Let us also compare these things with Isaiah 61:9, 10. “And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed. I will greatly rejoice in The Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels”. Please notice how these verses all relate to each other, and how each adds more understanding to the previous verses. These last verses tie in with the “marriage” mentioned in the previous one; and they also tie in with the “robes of Christ’s righteousness”. Many years ago, a workmate asked me for the BIBLE'S definition of “sin”. I replied that 1 John 3:4, stated that “Sin is the transgression of the law”. My friend would not accept that definition, and after some discussion, I asked him to give to me, what he considered to be the Bible's definition of “sin”. He replied that 1 John 5:17, stated, that “all unrighteousness is sin”. I tried to explain that the two verses were stating the same thing, but to no avail.

Years later, when I was reading through the Book of Psalms, I came to Psalm 119:172. “My tongue shall speak of Thy Word: for all thy commandments are righteousness”.

This caused me to remember my conversation with Arthur about “what does the Bible describe as “sin”? If “all unrighteousness is sin”; and “all of God's Commandments are righteousness”, then breaking God's Commandments, or as the KJV puts it, (“transgressing the law”) is “unrighteousness”, or “sin”.

Romans 3:23-25 “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God”;

The good news is that we can “put on” the “robe of Christ’s righteousness”; it means that we will have “put on the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ”, that means that we have taken on Christ’s perfect keeping of God's commandments, and his obedience.

No longer does the Father see my own imperfect righteousness; but he sees instead, the perfect righteousness of Jesus. Then I know that I will be saved in the kingdom, not because of my own righteousness, which is imperfect; but because of “the perfect righteousness of Jesus”.

We have now come full circle in our search for the truth of the matter of the difference in the translator's rendition of Revelation 22:14. And we have found that according to the Modern Versions, it is “those who have washed their robes” who will enter in through the gates into the City. To “wash your robes” you need to wash them in “the blood of Christ’s righteousness” which is imparted to all who have asked for God's grace that their sins will be covered by the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is “righteous” because he kept his “Father's Commandments”. John 15:10, and John 14:15,16,26,30 ; Matthew 19:17 ; 1 John chapters 2&3, all teach that we must be “commandment keepers”, And so does Revelation 12:17 ; Revelation 14:12 ; Ecclesiastes 12:13,14.

So after all this lengthy, (and really unnecessary), study into the “overall teaching of the Bible”, we have found that “those who have washed their robes” are “blessed”, (not “happy” as some versions say), because they are from the group which the Bible refers to as; “those that “do” [or keep] his commandments”, why not say so in the first place? Especially when the translators of the King James and of many other versions, considered that there was plenty of evidence that the verse should definitely read that God would bless commandment keepers. The translators of the RSV add a footnote to verse 14. (The first part) “Other ancient authorities read do His commandments”; then why not say so?

Many people are unaware that The “Revised Standard Version” is a combined Protestant - Roman Catholic Version, (see the prefaces to “The Common Bible”, or, “The Revised Standard Version”, (Catholic Edition), and “The New Revised Standard Version” (The Catholic Edition), where the Catholic scholars praise the fact that they did not have to change the wording of the NRSV, because of the presence of Roman Catholic scholars on the translation committee; it was also compatible to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

The Translators of “The New American Standard Bible”, (NASB) in their marginal references tie “the washing of robes” in Revelation 22:14, to Revelation 7:14, which reads from the KJV “.....These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the lamb”. This means that many Protestants are blindly following the Roman Catholic teachings.

The ancient manuscripts are divided in their readings. The two clauses are very similar in the Greek, the following transliteration will show the similarity.

“hoi poiountes tas entolas autou” (do His Commandments.)

“hoi plunontes tas stolas auton” (that wash their robes.)

It is easy to see that it is no easy matter to choose the best translation, but I must favour the KJV's wording, because there are more references to “Commandment Keeping”, see Revelation 12:17; Revelation 14:12; John 14:15, 21 ; John 15:10 ; 1 John 2:3-6 ; 1 John 3:4 ; Matthew 19:17, to mention a few; but there are only a couple of references to “washing robes”. You may think that I am biased, and I agree that I am when it comes to the evidence; I am biased in favour of “truth”, after much research such as has been presented in this article.

To further answer the question, “Does it matter which Bible we read, or study from”? let me ask you this question. “Do you want to learn about “purgatory”, which is a Roman Catholic teaching”, from your Protestant Bibles? Then read 2 Peter 2:9, in “The New International Version”; “If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the Day of Judgment, while continuing their punishment”. Or from “The New Revised Standard Version”, “then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the Day of Judgment”.

Both these versions are teaching that God continues to punish the wicked, in an eternally burning “Hell” or “Purgatory” (from the day they die, until the Judgment day). Even “The New King James Version” has incorrectly translated this verse, “Then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the Day of Judgment”.

This same verse from “The King James Version” reads, “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished”, what a difference! This version is teaching that the punishment is not given, or delivered, until the Day of Judgment; not punishing sinners “until” the Day of Judgment. This teaching of “eternal torment” is one that the Roman Catholic Church borrowed from the “Sun” worshippers of Egypt, and Babylon. Unfortunately, the Protestant Churches have continued this error.

“The King James Version” is certainly not teaching “Purgatory”, or “Hell”; but the true teaching, that the wicked dead do not receive their punishment until “the day of judgment”, or, at the Second Coming of Christ. Let's now see if other texts support this teaching

2 Corinthians 5:10, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad”.

This verse certainly teaches that everyone is judged worthy of salvation, or unworthy of salvation, at the same time; “The Second Coming of Jesus”.

Matthew 16:27, “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with his angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works”. This verse does not support the teaching of a place where people go to be punished, “Purgatory”, or “Hell”; until “The Judgment Day”. Neither does Revelation 20:12, 13, or Revelation 22:11, 12.

One of the things that have occurred to me as I wrote (at the top of this page), about “Egypt, and Babylon”; is the fact that these two countries are “Symbols of Wickedness, and all that is Evil” in The Bible.

“Egypt”, because God delivered the children of Israel from the “wickedness and evil” that they had been seduced into practising during the 490 years of sojourning in that country. God spent 40 years with His people in the wilderness to teach the children of Israel about “true worship”.

“Babylon”, because (1) the word is synonymous with “confusion”; (2) because the Book of Revelation uses “Babylon” as the symbol of “everything bad”.

Revelation 14:8, "And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication". And Rev 17:5, "And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH".

1 Peter 5:13, quoted from "The Holy Bible", by Monsignor Ronald Knox, Imprimatur, Bernardus Cardinal Griffin, Dec 8, 1954. "The Church here in Babylon, united with you by God's election sends you her greeting; so does my son Mark". There is an interesting footnote attached to this verse. "The word church is not expressed, but is evidently meant to be understood in the Greek. There can be little doubt that Babylon means Rome; cf, Apocalypse [Revelation] 17:5. It is important for us to understand the importance of that verse because the only proof that the Roman Catholic Church has that Peter was ever in Rome, is 1 Peter 5:13, with that footnote, in harmony with the understanding of the fact that Babylon means Rome; cf, Apocalypse [Revelation] 17:5. In the book of Daniel, we find that the "legs of Iron", the "king of fierce countenance", "the fourth beast diverse from all others", all refer to "Rome" as a wicked kingdom like Egypt & Babylon.