

Introduction

How the Combined Gospels Came to be Compiled

The compiler was given his first Bible on his tenth birthday, and thus began the quest to understand its message. The Bible is more than a book. It is the Word of God, i.e. God speaking directly to humanity through many wonderful witnesses. The highpoint is the coming of Jesus Christ, the Son God told in four books of the New Testament called the Gospels. Because they differ from each other, sometimes greatly, it is difficult to formulate a complete picture reading them separately. In order to understand what transpired from beginning to end in chronological order, the compiler attempted to read all four simultaneously by going back and forth between them. He finally came to realize that the solution was to create a single written document. This required preparing the complete text of each Gospel in an editable form. Text was then extracted from each of these documents and placed in chronological order in a single document. This constituted the first draft. The combined text was then arranged in chapters to highlight major events. Several proof-readings and revisions were done to ensure that no text was left out, that there were no misspellings or omissions, and that the text was accurately referenced and presented in an easy to read format.

Why the King James Version of 1611

The reader may ask why the Authorized King James Version of 1611 was used, and not a more modern translation. First, the KJV is a very precise translation of the Gospels into English. Next, the revisers alert the reader to any words not in the original texts that were added. Finally, the KJV has more resources available for study than any other translation.

The translation of the King James Bible from the original languages was more a labor of love than a *commercial* endeavor. The goal of that remarkable group of scholars was to accurately translate the original texts into the best English of the time. Their dedication resulted in a book of remarkable accuracy.

The King James Version of 1611 is in Elizabethan English, the English of Shakespeare. Many love this classic style of writing and find it uplifting. Its lyrical form of communicating ideas lends verses and whole chapters to memorization. For these readers going back to its pages for inspiration, insight, and comfort is deeply satisfying. Others consider it strange and overly formal. They want something more aligned to present day English, something more familiar and *easier* to read. Caution: Let us not forget that we are seeking Truth.

Every discipline has developed a specialized vocabulary to facilitate accurate communication between teacher, learner, and among practitioners. To master any subject a student must become familiar with its specialized vocabulary. If a student neglects the vocabulary by using words with imprecise meaning the result will be confusion and greater difficulty in mastering the subject. Why imagine that the Bible is written with any less need for precision than textbooks on mathematics, chemistry, physics, art, or music? Students of the Bible who are unable to read Hebrew or Greek need to find an accurate rendition of the original texts in English. What many readers don't realize is how much the funny

sounding pronouns in the KJV contribute to making it a clear and accurate translation. Appendix 1 discusses the meaning and value of these pronouns.

The Authorized King James Version of 1611 has numerous resources to aid its study. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance to the Bible* enables the student to look up words in English and find the original Hebrew or Greek word and its meaning as defined by theologians. You have free access to this resource at www.Elijah.com. *The Interpreter's Bible* presents the KJV and *Revised Standard Version* of the Bible side by side and includes exegesis and exposition written by scholastic theologians. *The Companion Bible in the Authorized Version of 1611* is a valuable resource that gives the original Hebrew or Greek word and its best meaning in the verse being read. It also includes enlightening Appendixes that provide valuable background information. Books by the Reverend E.W. Bullinger are excellent sources of information for the serious Bible student. While there are many translations and resources available to aid one's study, "but one thing is needful,"¹ and that is an earnest and open-minded study of the Bible itself. This compilation is intended to aid the reader to that end.

Jesus the Master Teacher

Nicodemus acknowledged the divine origin of Jesus' teaching when he said: "we know that thou art a teacher (*Gr. διδάσκαλος; didaskalos*) come from God."² When Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene after the resurrection she addressed him: "Rabboni; which is to say, Master."³ The Greek word translated *Master* is *didaskalos*, the identical word used by Nicodemus translated *teacher*. Thus, Mary was addressing Jesus as the supreme, ultimate or Master teacher. This aligns with what Jesus declared, for he said: "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak."⁴ In other words, God told him *what* to teach and *how* to teach it.

A good teacher strives to meet the individual needs of students. To this end the teacher often repeats ideas, facts and explanations. The teacher may vary the words and illustrations to maintain interest so the quick learner doesn't get bored and the slow learner finally grasps the point being made. A good teacher works with students to overcome individual obstacles to learning. Most important, a good teacher has pupils put into practice what they are learning. Jesus did all of these things! So why should it be thought strange that Jesus varied his words to make a point? Why should it be thought strange that he reinforced a point being made by repeating it over and over again? Why question or doubt that the healing of the same disease or malady occurred more than once? Note how many times the scriptures inform us that what Jesus said was not understood! No wonder Jesus repeated what he said and did many times. Recall what John the Beloved Disciple wrote: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."⁵

What this Compilation Includes

This compilation was completed without adding, deleting or changing a single word in the KJV texts. Italicized words have been left in italics. Appendix 3 discusses the significance of italicized words.

Two fonts are used to distinguish KJV Bible text from added material. Bible text and verse numbers that were added by the translators to facilitate referencing and are printed in a Roman font. Everything else is printed in Arial.

There are two combined Gospels. *The Combined Gospels* is 167 pages arranged in 179 chapters. Bible text is in 12-point Roman. Verse numbers are in 9-point Roman. Chapter number and title are in 9-point Arial. The heading: "According to the Gospel of . . ." that precedes any event included in two or more Gospels is in 9-point Arial. Book, chapter, and verse number are placed in parenthesis and printed in 8-point Arial.

The Combined Gospels with Notes is 200 pages in length with the same chapter designations as the version without notes. This makes it identical to *The Combined Gospels* except for the addition of notes. Notes are printed in 8-point Arial to distinguish them from the Bible text and make them easy to skip over by the reader. Notes serve various purposes: to date an event; to amplify the meaning of a word; to share a non-canonical scripture that reinforces or illuminates the canonical version; to provide spiritual insight; to present useful background information, etc. Appendix 6 is a list of quotations.

Appendix 5 is a list of "Check Point Events." The fact that some events are recorded in more than one Gospel is useful in combining the text in proper order because anything that precedes an event in one Gospel must necessarily precede that event in the other Gospels as well.

Whenever an event is presented in more than one Gospel each occurrence is introduced by the phrase "According to the Gospel of . . .". While it may seem advantageous to use only one version of an event to avoid repetition, there are reasons for rejecting that approach. It is a known fact that several witnesses to an event may report it differently. This does not mean that witnesses are leaving out or distorting facts. One observer may see details overlooked by another. Seldom do witnesses use the same words when repeating what they heard another person say. For these reasons placing all versions of the same event together may provide a more complete picture of what happened or was said.

Appendix 8 is a Verse Locator prepared in four tables in the order: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The Appendix was compiled so that anyone reading another translation can easily look up the King James Version and compare. The following will illustrate how to use Appendix 8. Assume you have just read John 1:14 in the *Revised English Bible*: "So the Word became flesh; he made his home among us, and we saw his glory, such glory as befits the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth." To compare this translation to the KJV open the Verse Locator for the Gospel of John. It begins on page 437. In the column headed "Chapter/Verse(s)" read down until you reach 1:14. Reading across you see it is located on page 177 in the chapter titled: *Mary Conceives Christ Jesus*. Opening *The Combined Gospels with Notes* to this page you read: And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

Establishing Unity Among Christians

The life of Jesus was an unparalleled demonstration of overcoming all forms of limitation, even death, through universal and timeless spiritual laws.

Consequently, his words are not as “sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal”⁶ like those of so many professors, who “declare or admit in words or appearances only.”⁷ Jesus was a Master who proved his teaching practical by what are called miracles. These demonstrations are often denied as having ever happened, or ridiculed as exaggerations, because they are contrary to what mankind today considers possible. Jesus cautioned against such an attitude in his *first* beatitude: “Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”⁸ He did not say “the poor.” He said “the poor in spirit!” Here the word “spirit” refers to an inclination to exercise self-will, a tendency toward the *conceit* and *arrogance* that often accompanies academic achievement, or the attainment of positions of authority in organizations or institutions. To be “poor in spirit” is to have renounced elitism, the feeling of being superior to others while harboring the inclination to rule over them.

Jesus established no organized religion. From the minute he proclaimed his mission in Nazareth at the age of thirty, until he was brutally murdered in Jerusalem a little over three years later, he was constantly harassed by the religious authorities of his time. And for what was he persecuted? Most often for healing on the Sabbath! Today that seems ridiculous. What hospital operated by either Jews or Christians would refuse to treat the sick or injured on the Sabbath [Saturday for the Jew or Sunday for a Christian] in this day and age? Not one!

We know that on two occasions Jesus warned his disciples NOT to establish a religious hierarchy. The second warning took place the evening of the “Last Supper” *AFTER* he had washed the feet of his disciples. Why? Because he found them *again* arguing about who should be the greatest. Jesus was soon to be crucified, and here they were quarreling over who would become the top dog when he was no longer with them. Do we think it was only among his followers that such thinking and behavior is possible, or is it an ugly characteristic of the human mind that tends to be manifested in all forms of organization?

Today there are thousands of Christian denominations. Unfortunately they tend to claim to be right and that the others are wrong. Many profess to love, and even to worship Jesus, while at the same time they condemn anyone who holds a different view from theirs. Frankly, most of these doctrinal differences have nothing to do with LIVING what Jesus taught. It is recorded that when there were doctrinal disagreements, John the Beloved Disciple would stand up saying, “Little children, love one another.” Apparently, this priceless advice from the one disciple found worthy to receive the Revelation has been thrown to the winds.

The fact is everyone must eventually come to realize that the most relevant and practical understanding of what Jesus taught comes not from men, but from listening to the “still small voice.”⁹ The reason for reading the Bible and pondering the words and deeds of Jesus in the context in which they occurred is to help us make that connection. What Jesus expected is that we would then put into practice what has unfolded to us. Contradictory human opinions are worse than useless. So, why not trust the all-loving God to unfold the Truth directly to you?

Perhaps the time has come for mankind to consider what Jesus taught and demonstrated in a broader context. Organized religion and politics were no friend to Jesus. Two days before he was executed for the purpose of silencing forever

his message to mankind, he spoke these words: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."¹⁰ They have not, and they never will, even if they cease to exist in printed form. Whatever theologians may say, the real reason for the brutal crucifixion of Jesus was envy. Jesus' success in reaching the people through healing and teaching was seen as a threat by the established religious and political authorities. The last straw for the ecclesiastics was when Jesus restored Lazarus to life. The Gospel of John records: "from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death."¹¹ Just days later, when the people cheered his entry into Jerusalem the ecclesiastics "said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him."¹² The night of the sham trial Jesus was sent from Pilate (the Roman Governor) to Herod Antipas (tetrarch of Galilee appointed by Caesar) and back to Pilate. "The same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves."¹³ Roman soldiers crucified Jesus because the ecclesiastics blackmailed Pilate to do their dirty work. How else can the following words be understood: "And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar."¹⁴

In the Bible this relatively small but powerful group of envious, greedy, self-seeking, deceptive, dishonest, hateful, and cruel men is referred to as "the Jews." It is only in reference to this specific group of men that plotted for and insisted upon the crucifixion of Jesus that the term "Jews" is used in the Gospels. Even within the Sanhedrin there were honorable Jewish men, such as Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus, who were opposed to the execution of Jesus. Among the common folk there was no animosity toward Jesus. The common people were manipulated by the ecclesiastical and political elites to demand that Pilate crucify Jesus. Yet despite the persecution, torture, and crucifixion Jesus prevailed. His refusal to hate his betrayer and those that persecuted him has implications for all mankind far beyond any merely religious considerations.

It has been nearly one hundred and fifty years since the following words were written: "Jesus of Nazareth was the most scientific man that ever trod the globe. He plunged beneath the material surface and found the spiritual cause."¹⁵ "Jesus of Nazareth was a natural and divine Scientist. He was so before the material world saw him."¹⁶ The author of those words was an amazing healer and follower of Jesus' because she understood and put into practice what he taught.

Perhaps we are not asking the right questions and therefore are not finding the answers that would lift humanity far above and beyond the claims of mortality. One question to consider is: how can science and religion work together instead of remaining in isolated compartments of human experience where they operate from such apparently irreconcilable standpoints?

Religion, when dealing with inexplicable phenomena resorts to tradition sometimes, coupled with fear, to perpetuate a doctrine. The doctrine itself may have been formulated in the past by a respected individual, or developed by a committee and then ratified by vote. From that point forward it became a matter of orthodox belief and any doubting or questioning was viewed as infidelity. For

that reason, many today refuse to consider any form of religious affiliation simply because this dogmatic and manipulative approach stifles free thought and honest investigation. To gain advancing insights into *any* subject requires an open and inquisitive mind. Unfortunately, organized religion often does not promote such an attitude toward those with a different point of view. It is unfortunate how narrow minded and self-righteous are some, claiming to be Christians, toward those of other denominations, or no denomination at all, who see things in a different light.

What is called science can be equally dogmatic. How can that be? Science begins its quest for answers under the assumption that only evidence obtained through the physical senses is worthy of consideration. In short, it limits its investigation to matter. What would happen if our scientists did as Jesus of Nazareth and began to plunge beneath the material surface of things to find the spiritual cause? In other words, what if scientists would open thought to a “fourth dimension of Spirit,”¹⁷ while at the same time, religionists accepted the idea that there are logical answers to unexplained phenomena, and teach that *understanding* and *doing* as Jesus taught, not merely believing in him, is the way to find reasonable and practical approaches in both religion and science?

“If God, the All-in-all, be the creator of the universe, including man, then everything entitled to a classification as truth or Science, must be comprised in a knowledge or understanding of God, for there can be nothing beyond illimitable divinity.”¹⁸ This understanding brings science and religion together. Can you see how such an approach, by breaking down the walls of prejudice, bigotry, conceit, and rivalry would open the door to amazing advances in healthcare, personal freedom, and solutions to complex social issues such as poverty, crime, hatred, addiction, racism, etc., thereby creating a much brighter future for all mankind?

May the reading of this unified presentation of the four Gospels open to you, and through you, greater possibilities for everyone here on earth, bless you as it has me, and may “we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”¹⁹

God Bless us one and all,

William D. Saunders
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¹Lk. 10:42. ²Jn. 3:2,3 Jn. 20:16. ⁴Jn. 13:1. ⁵Jn. 21:25. ⁶I Cor. 13:1. ⁷ Webster. ⁸ Matt. 5:3. ⁹ I Ki. 19:12. ¹⁰ Matt. 24:35; Mk. 13:31 & Lk. 21:33. ¹¹Jn. 11:53. ¹² Jn. 12:19. ¹³ Lk. 23:12. ¹⁴Jn. 19:12. ¹⁵ S&H. 313:23-26. ¹⁶ Ret. 26:17-18. ¹⁷ Mis. 22:12. ¹⁸ S&H 127:4-8. ¹⁹ Eph. 4:13.