

Things of the Kingdom and of Jesus the Christ - 4

Connections in Acts

The 'things of the kingdom and Jesus the Christ' are preached throughout Acts: from the third verse to the last verse of the book. This series of articles on Acts explores these 'things'.

The Bible is the only way by which we can learn about God's offer of salvation. It was penned thousands of years ago, mostly in ancient Hebrew and Greek. Many learned scholars, who had great respect for the sanctity of the original texts, have worked hard to translate the ancient texts into English.

Nowadays there are many English versions of the Bible. These vary from 'word-for-word' versions to 'thought-for-thought' versions. Word-for-word versions are very faithful to the original words but may not read like modern English. Thought-for-thought versions are easier to read because they are more like paraphrases. But these are heavily influenced by the religious beliefs of the translators, and so can differ significantly from the original and can be misleading.

The Bible consists of 66 books penned by various writers, using different styles. Critics often make the unfair criticism that we can prove anything we like from the Bible. If we take verses out of context this is indeed possible, as it would be of other literary works.

Real Words, Real Meanings

However, the original words of the Bible were inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16) and do have a specific meaning.

Therefore, we need always to try to understand this actual meaning, what God really meant by the words. The best way we can do this is to let the Bible interpret itself, by comparing similar verses in accurate translations.

Even so, the culture, habits and customs described in it belong largely to the Middle East as it was centuries ago. Consequently, the ideas expressed, although familiar to the original readers, can be unusual to us. We cannot hope to properly understand the messages without trying to get some familiarity with the overall context. Moreover, there are some passages that even experts find difficult to translate faithfully into English. To help us understand the Bible, we can address these problems by using reliable study tools.

Expert Help

A valuable resource is given in many word-for-word versions where the translators have provided margins with notes and cross-references. These represent the views of the translators and so are not inspired, and can also vary from version to version. However, they have been created through a lot of effort by experts in the original languages.

Margins can include:

- ❖ Notes about translation, such as the literal meaning or alternative translation of a word or phrase
- ❖ Other verses where specific words or phrases (especially less common ones) occur

- ❖ Other verses explaining an idea or describing a similar event or theme
- ❖ Verses that are alluded to or directly quoted in the text, such as fulfilled prophecies.

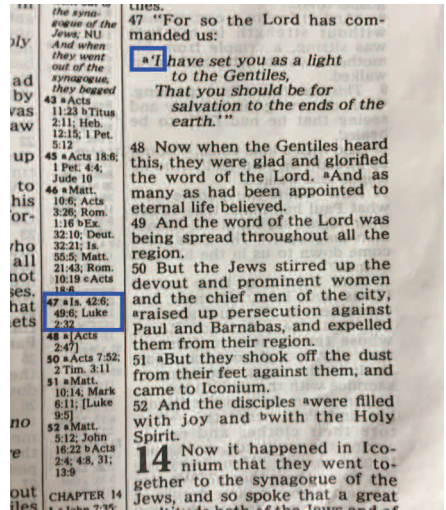
The notes help us with the difficulties of translation into English. The verses listed in the margin are called cross-references, and can help us to compare associated passages in the Bible (as perceived by the translators).

For example, the picture shows Acts 13:47 and part of the margin in a New King James Bible. There is a superscript letter 'a' against the word 'I'. The corresponding letter 'a' in the margin lists Isaiah 42:6 and Isaiah 49:6 as cross-references. Isaiah 49:6 is the verse actually being quoted and Isaiah 42:6 is another verse with the same prophecy about Gentiles and the gospel, which actually includes the phrase *'light to the Gentiles'*. So, although the Jews were shocked at the hope of the gospel being extended to non-Jews, this had been stated as God's purpose many years before in their Old Testament scriptures.

Connecting Thoughts

In fact, many aspects of the gospel are cited in the Old Testament. Table A opposite shows cross-references from Acts to the Old Testament, where an aspect of the gospel message is described. This was taken from the New King James version published by Thomas Nelson. Verses shown in blue are passages quoted word-for-word, and the others are clearly referred to.

This proves that the hope of salvation was always to be through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ,



and was always intended for Jews and non-Jews.

The gospel therefore has its foundations in the Old Testament and simply cannot be properly understood just from the New Testament. In fact, we need to study the Old Testament references in the New Testament if we want to understand the New Testament.

Table B gives examples of other cross-references in Acts to the Old Testament, with comments. In fact in this version of the Bible there are more than 30 cross-references to similar events and more than 70 cross-references to similar ideas or concepts. God's message is precious and not open to individual interpretation (see Galatians 1:8-9 and 2 Peter 1:20).

We should take each word in the whole Bible seriously and study its messages very carefully and precisely. Using cross-references can help us greatly in our quest for salvation which is so clearly offered in the gospel message.

Anna Hart
Concluded

A: Cross references from Acts to the Old Testament, referring to the Gospel

Gospel Message	Reference to Old Testament <i>Old Testament reference & (Acts passage where cited)</i>
Suffering of Christ	Isaiah 53: 7–8 (8:32–33*)
Resurrection	Psalm 2:7 (13:33*), Psalm 16:8–11 (2:25–28*), Psalm 16:10 (2:31), Psalm 110:1 (2:34–35*), Isaiah 53:10 (2:31), Hosea 6:2 (10:40)
Exaltation of Jesus	Psalm 2:7 (13:33*), Psalm 68:18 (2:34–35), Psalm 110:1 (2:34–35*), Psalm 118:22 (4:11*), Isaiah 28:16 (4:11), Daniel 7:13 (7:56)
Jesus is the promised Messiah (Christ)	Genesis 12:3, 18:18, 22:18, 26:4, 28:14 (3:25*), Deuteronomy 18:15,18 (3:22*), 16 examples (26:6)
Christ – David’s son	Psalm 132:11 (2:30, 13:23), Isaiah 11:1 (13:23)
Apostles and the Holy Spirit	Isaiah 44:3 (11:16), Joel 2:28 (1:5), Joel 2:28–32 (2:17–21*)
Miracles foretold	Isaiah 35:6 (3:8–9)
Gentiles can be saved	Isaiah 42:6 (13:47,26:23, 28:28), Isaiah 42:7,16 (26:18), Isaiah 49:6 (13:47*, 26:23, 28:28), Amos 9:11–12 (15:16–17*)
Salvation through Jesus	Isaiah 57:19 (10:36), Jeremiah 31:34 (13:38), Zechariah 13:1 (10:43)
Return of Jesus/Judgement/ Day of the Lord	Deuteronomy 18:19 (3:23*), Daniel 7:13 (1:11), Joel 2:31 (2:20*)
God is the creator	Exodus 20:11 (4:24), Psalm 102:25 (7:50*), Isaiah 42:5 (17:24)

Blue text means that the words are directly quoted in the Acts text*

B: Other examples of cross-references from Acts to the Old Testament

Acts	Cross reference(s)	Link	Comment
4:8–10	Isaiah 35:6	Crippled man healed	Prophecy that the ‘lame shall leap as a deer’
7:55	Exodus 24:17	‘glory of God’ seen	The glory of God is shown to the Hebrews
12:3	Exodus 12:15 Exodus 23:15	‘days of unleavened bread’	Explains Passover and why Herod wanted to keep Peter in prison (verse 4)
17:25	Genesis 2:7 Isaiah 42:5 Daniel 5:23	God is supreme and in control	Same ideas
26:6	16 references across 8 different books	‘promise made by God to our fathers’	Examples of these promises