***The Analysis of Scripture - PH01-02***

We are studying the book of Philippians. We have begun with the first verse, and we have looked a little bit at background relative to the city of Philippi and the church at Philippi. This was, in effect, the same as being in the city of Rome itself with all the privileges pertaining thereto. Paul founded this church about ten years previous to the time of his writing to them. He had a warm personal relationship with this congregation, which was in contrast to the relationship that he had with the Corinthian church, for example. This church Paul referred to in Philippians 4:1 as his joy and crown. This was because the Philippian church was in a good organizational condition and in a good spiritual state. Paul writes this letter about the year 61 A.D. near the end of his first Roman imprisonment. This is the last of four prison epistles written along with Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians. The occasion of the letter was a financial gift which he received from the Philippian church brought by Epaphroditus to the prison cell in Rome.

**Isagogics and Exegesis**

We looked at the background of interpreting the Word of God, and that's what I want to look at with you now--the business of analyzing Scripture. This will be how we go about learning the Word of God, and how we go about gathering and understanding of God's Word. What is involved in this whole business of learning the truth? We pointed out that there were certain elements which were involved. First of all, there is the matter of isagogics. This is the matter of the historical, the cultural, and the geographical background which existed at the time of the writing of the Scripture. To understand the Scripture, we have to understand something about the isagogical background. We're going to look at this a little more in detail in a moment. Then there is the element of exegesis. That's the rule of Greek grammar, or the general term is the "syntax." This is how words and forms and structures are related to one another.

**Definitions, Hermeneutics, and Categories**

Then we had definitions--the meaning of the Greek words. It's not enough for us to say that this is what the word means today in Greek. We have to go back, and we want to know: what did it mean to the man who walked the streets of New Testament times? The meaning of the word then is what is significant to us in interpreting Scripture today. Then there is the element of hermeneutics which is the interpretation--the laws of interpretation of Scriptures. There are certain laws that govern how you may interpret Scripture and come out with a true analysis. Finally, in analyzing and learning the Word of God, there is classifying Scriptures into doctrinal summaries. These are the categories--summaries of doctrine. This is taking Scriptures that deal with one subject and bringing them into a single classification or a doctrinal category.

**Deficiency**

The interpretation of Scriptures a very vital factor in your life. We have a need for this. Colossians 1:9 says, "For this cause, we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." The phrase "that you might be filled" dealt with a Greek word that means to fill up a deficiency of some kind. Here the deficiency is to be filled with the knowledge. The Greek word here is "epignosis," the full knowledge. We have responded with positive acceptance to that knowledge such that we may fill a deficiency in our soul with that full knowledge of God. This knowledge of His will, and an understanding of His will, is contained in Bible doctrine. So in other words, every Christian, from the point of his salvation, while he may be deeply in love with the Lord and may be wholly dedicated to the things of the Lord, begins the Christian life with a terrible efficiency within his soul. He begins with a spiritual emptiness that only the Word of God can fill.

Very often, the Christian who is starting off in the Christian life is extremely deceived because he is handed a Bible and he is told by sincere people, "Now, go read the Word of God so that you can learn about the Christian way of life; and, so that you can learn the will of God and what God wants you to do." So that Christian sits down and he starts reading the Word of God. And pretty soon, he discovers that he gets just about nowhere, and gets so discouraged that he just checks out altogether. That is a very cruel thing to do to a person who is not trained and who is not informed and who has not been taught the Word of God: to say, "Here you are. Take the Bible and start reading it." You give him the impression that he can learn something. It's rather unkind to give people the impression that we can give you a few tools and techniques and devices, and then you can go home and sit down and learn techniques of learning the Bible and studying the Word of God. Now you can go to a certain extent on that, but you will not really go into the depths of the Word. You'll not go into the real significance of the Word by that method. Now you say, "That's rather terrible. Here I am. I want to know what God thinks, and you're telling me that I can get just about nowhere on my own."

**The Pastor-Teacher**

However, I'm also happy to tell you that God has made a provision. This is where the pastor-teacher gift comes into the local assembly operation. This is why this gift, along with the gift of evangelism, was put into operation during the age of grace. The evangelist is to be reaching people with the gospel and bringing them to the point of salvation. The pastor-teacher is to be picking them up at that point in the local church assembly and filling this spiritual deficiency which we have by nature. If you insist on going along in your Christian life and saying, "I can fill my spiritual deficiency," I'll tell you what you'll do. You'll start mouthing clichés and platitudes. You'll start being a happy-go-lucky character that runs around like a cocker spaniel exuding how much you love the Lord, and how much you love the brethren, and how enthusiastic you are for missionaries, and everything else down the line. You'll be putting on a front. You'll be playing roles. You'll be using God-talk of one kind or another to impress yourself that you have advanced spiritually, and to impress the people around you. However, discerning Christians will not be deceived by that, and you should not be either. You can sit in most churches, I'm sorry to say, for 25 years and have very little of your spiritual deficiency filled.

What I'm going to try to explain to you now is how that spiritual deficiency can be filled, and how the pastor-teacher in the local church must function in order to fill this deficiency. If he does not function in this way, your deficiency will not be fed. One of the sure signs that he is not functioning on that basis, for example, is that he is not preaching through a book of the Bible. Now there may be times when he is presenting a special subject. This is when he is presenting, maybe, a basic doctrine course in which he's taking one doctrine or one summary category, and he's explaining that, but even then he will be explaining it on the basis of all of these elements that we went over that are involved in interpreting.

You can almost always walk into a church and tell whether the pastor-teacher is doing his job by just observing whether he is opening a book and saying, "Alright, this morning we're at verse 1." The next Sunday, he comes up and he says, "We're at verse 2." The next Sunday, he says, "We're at verse 3 and 4," and so on down the line. If he is not doing that, you may almost be sure that you will sit there; your heart may sometimes even be moved; you may be quite thrilled sometimes with what you hear; and, you may even learn something about the Word of God, but in the long haul, your spiritual deficiency will not be filled.

So Colossians 1:9 declares this deficiency. Our soul lacks it. We need this divine viewpoint. It can only be filled through expository teaching of a pastor-teacher gift. It is the most important responsibility that you as an individual believer have in your life, and that is to attend Bible class to get this deficiency filled. Now you're not going to do this overnight. It takes time to fill this deficiency. It also takes time to make up for what you lose. This is because the spiritual maturity that you're developing will either go forward or it will go backwards. There will be times when you will be out of touch with the things of the Lord, and all that time, your reservoir of spiritual viewpoint is decreasing. Finally, when you decide to get with it again, that's wonderful, but you're going to have to make up for lost ground.

Many Christians just fluctuate at a certain low spiritual IQ level. About the time they begin to get filled up with something, something knocks them back out, and it drains off. Then they come back; they get filled up a little; they get knocked out again; it drains off; and, they never really get with it. They get the impression that because they've been around church for 25 years that they know something about the Word of God. They never realize that their reservoir is at a very low level because of their own instability spiritually. So this is the most important thing in your life. You are to see to it that you are here for these opportunities to fill this deficiency. The individual pieces of information of any doctrine are classified together as a result of these interpretations, and you're given an insight on a specific category of doctrine.

Now this provision in the local church is unbelievably neglected. It's one of the hardest things for us to believe that this is so. Pastors do not, by and large, prepare to teach. Consequently, when they get up, they have to give devotions. They had to give talks to your emotions. They have to try to inspire you to somehow be what you should be as a Christian.

Now I hope that you are going to be a smart enough Christian and limit what I say to what I say. I get a little tired of Christians who are of a certain type of mentality--usually emotionally dominated mentalities. They'll inevitably do it. They will hear a remark, and they will not limit that remark to what was said, but they will go and broaden it and expand it to everything that they think is implied by the remark. I didn't say that pastors were bad; I didn't say that pastors were not faithful; I didn't say that pastors were not trying to do their people good; and, I didn't even say that they were no good. What I said was that pastors, by their seminary training, by and large, have not understood the pastor-teacher gift that they had been given, and how to function with that gift, and how important that gift in its operation is to the believer who sits out there. That's all I said. If you want to disagree with that, then you just research and you see whether expository preaching is the pattern and the norm for churches or not.

Don't go around and say that we badmouthed other preachers or other churches. That isn't what we said. If we mentioned something about a great evangelist who happens to have unbelievers who call Jesus Christ the illegitimate bastard son of a prostitute named Mary and a Roman soldier, and he has those men stand up and pray in a campaign, and it bothers some fundamental preachers, don't say that we said any more than that. Don't say that we don't think the evangelist preaches the gospel; that he shouldn't run the campaign; that people aren't being saved; or, that what he is doing is not worthy. Just say that we don't think that the Bible justifies unbelievers leading believers in prayer. It doesn't take too much intelligence to do that. But I am amazed at how stupid Christians are who go around badmouthing people who are trying to alert Christians to the distinctives that are all important. You are saying that we are saying bad things about Christians, and that we are downgrading Christians.

This is one of the nice things about having audio recordings of our studies. When anybody makes that remark to us, one nice thing about audio recordings is that we're on record. All we do is say, "You get the audio recording; play it for me; and, prove your point." Man, that shuts them up fast. You stay within the coral that we build. That corral is for your information, and you should know this. Throughout the New Testament, you'll find the apostle Paul saying, "Watch out for so-and-so. He did me injury. He will hurt you. Watch out for so-and-so who used to be on our team. He is no longer on our team. He got emotionally dominated, and he went off after material things. He developed a great love for material things; he got siphoned off; and, he got drawn into an absorption with the things of this world. When you meet Demas next time, he's no longer on the team, so just take that into account." Paul isn't saying that Demas is an unbeliever; that Demas is no good; or, that Demas isn't doing anything good. He just says, "Watch him. He's not on our team anymore, and I want you to know about that."

Throughout the Word of God, Christians are alerted to people who are out of line with the Word and doctrinal principles. You have to know what those principles are. You have to know what that doctrine is. Then when you are alerted to it, you say, "I see. Yes, that is out of line." And that's what we objected to. We don't object to everything else. We object to what is out of line with the specific guideline of the Word of God. None of us is perfect, and we need this constant reminding and alerting to these times when we are tempted for one reason or another to deviate from what is God's viewpoint.

So church members, by and large, find it no problem to ignore Bible study. They view themselves as experts on what church is all about; and, what pastors are supposed to do. The reason for this is that nobody is there teaching them. They have a total misconception as to what they can do on their own; why God ever created such a thing like the local church in the first place; and, why He made such a big issue in Ephesians 4 about giving a pastor-teacher gift now that Jesus Christ had gone back to heaven.

The thing that we want to consider now is the nature of interpretation. To interpret the Bible means that we approach it objectively. Our business is to discover what the text teaches--not what we want to see, or to support our views. The approach has to be exegetical on the basis of the grammatical relationships of the language in which God wrote this book; the approach has to be historical on the background of the times when it was written; and, the approach must be on the basis of the original languages--not on the basis of a translation. God particularly brought these languages into being for the writing of Scriptures. It is impossible to take the original languages of Scripture and to convert them into a translation. The approach has to be to seek the one interpretation of the text.

Remember that every passage of Scripture has only one meaning, and that's all. It may have many applications, as per the situation, but it has one meaning. This is what is resisted by many people. They don't think that you can read the Bible and say, "This is what it means, and nothing else." The resister wants to keep the door wide open, and he's the one who doesn't like that. He wants to say, "No, it can mean this. It can mean that. Maybe this, and maybe that."

I'll tell you another evidence of the pastor who is not doing his job. He says, "Maybe it means this, and maybe it means that. Professor so-and-so thinks it means this, and brother so-and-so over here thinks it means that. What do you think it means?" And we put it all together, and we have a lot of meaninglessness. They feel that this is more comforting and even more scholarly. However, when God the Holy Spirit wrote this book, it was like when He wrote the book of Revelation, the only book in the Bible that promises a blessing to those who read it; who hear it; who obey it; and, who listen to it. How in the world can you receive a blessing for obeying a book that you can't interpret and you can't understand? God the Holy Spirit meant for us to be able to understand every passage. Now we may not have some background information. We may not have some element at hand. There may be some features which we have not grasped from the totality of Scripture that limit our understanding of the Scriptures, but if we had those, it would be very clear. The Bible is not a book of secrets.

So the approach has to be finding the interpretation of the text. The approach has to be with Scripture as a whole. It has to be consistent. Passages have to fit into their categories. The approach has to be one where we use clear passages to interpret those that may be obscure.

**Isagogics**

I want to look a little more in detail with you at these basic features that have to do with elements that are involved in interpreting Scripture. First of all, this matter of isagogics, the background.

**Military Language**

Let's use, for example, the city of Philippi that we've been talking about. You cannot derive maximum understanding about any passage of Scripture in the book of Philippians without a knowledge of the history; the culture; and, the geography of this city. This was a town that was filled with military personnel. It was in a Roman colony status of classification. This carried with it certain very important privileges.

It was apropos for Paul, in speaking to Philippians, a military-oriented town, for example, in Philippians 2:25 to refer to Epaphroditus as "a fellow soldier." This was a fitting term for writing to these people. When you understand that Philippi was filled with ex-soldiers and veterans, it is very apropos and particularly fraught with meaning, and Paul knew what he was doing when he used that term. In Philippians 1:27, he uses the term "striving together" (fighting together) for the Gospel. This was a fitting term for veterans. When he speaks of "courage in the face of the enemy" in Philippians 1:28, this was a fitting term. When he says in Philippians 4:7 that the Christian's mind is to be "guarded" by the peace of God (the happiness), soldiers knew what guard duty was all about. Only in Philippians does Paul refer to the "Praetorium guard" in Philippians 1:13. This was the guard which was used to guard prisoners, and it was an elite segment of the military force. Paul insisted in Acts 16:37 on "an honorable discharge" from the false imprisonment that had been put upon him. People who were in the military know the desirability of an honorable discharge.

**A Roman Colony**

Philippi was a gentile stronghold as a Roman city, so it was natural for Paul to warn them in strong language against the Jewish legalists who were plaguing the gentile Christians in Philippians 3:2-3. Philippi's privileged status as a Roman colony made it fitting for Paul to stress that a Christian's real citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). These people were proud of being Philippians. They were proud of being citizens of Rome, and the Roman colony of Philippi. They had just cause for being proud of that. But Paul says, "Your citizenship (your real citizenship) is in heaven." Now the significance of that statement is never grasped unless you understand that Philippi was a Roman colony. This gave it certain special privileges equal to being on the streets of Rome itself, as a citizen of Rome.

A Roman colony like Philippi was inclined because of its patriotic attitude to deify the emperor and to worship him. So, it is understandable that, in Philippians 2:5-10, the apostle Paul lays great stress upon the deity of Jesus Christ. It is not without reason that, to the Philippians, who were surrounded by defying the emperor, he made this great declaration concerning the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Philip II and Alexander the Great**

Well this city was founded by Philip II who seized the throne of Macedonia in 359 B.C. When he seized Macedonia, it was about the size of the state of Vermont, but it was part of a vast region originally called Thrace. When Philip took over, he modernized his army; he gave them longer spears; he created charging cavalry; and, he set up a better table of organization that greatly enhanced the efficiency of his troops. Philip financed his military operations from those gold mines that surrounded the city of Philippi. When he died, his son, Alexander the Great, carried on in his father's footsteps and carried the Greek conquests into the Greek world empire.

These conquests of Philip and of Alexander are important as background because they explain what God was doing in preparing a world for the arrival of Christ and of the New Testament. This is because, as a result of what Philip II and his son Alexander did in world conquest, all the world came to speak Greek. Greek became the trade language everywhere. Consequently, the scene was set by God deliberately for the rapid propagation of the New Testament Scriptures and of the doctrines of Christianity.

**Julius Caesar**

Well, the city of Philippi was conquered by Rome in 168 B.C. However, it came to its most dramatic status in the year 42 B.C. because of a historic battle which was fought there at Philippi. Brutus and Cassius were the conspirators who had assassinated Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. They had sought control of the Roman Empire. They were resisted by Antony and Octavian. In 42 B.C., Antony and Octavian (who was Julius Caesar's adopted son) met Brutus and Cassius in a series of two battles. Brutus and Cassius were killed. Antony and Octavian were victorious. Philippi, in honor of this victory, secured its Roman colony status with all the privileges of that. This, incidentally, is what explains the words in Acts 16:12 "and a colony," where Luke describes Philippi and he adds the words "and a colony." That's what it means. It means "and a Roman colony," a special kind of city. This is how isagogics fills the picture so that we understand the fullness of what we're reading.

**Antony and Cleopatra**

Antony and Octavian divided the Roman world between them into East and West. Antony took the East, and Octavian took the West. Then, into this picture came the famed Cleopatra. Cleopatra had been removed from her throne. Julius Caesar moved in and conquered Egypt, and restored her to her throne. Julius Caesar and Cleopatra became great friends. She returned to Rome with him, and bore him a son, Caesarion. After Julius Caesar was murdered, Cleopatra returned to Egypt. She was summoned by Antony to Tarsus in Asia Minor to answer the charge of aiding Caesar's enemies in his assassination. Cleopatra, being a dramatic girl, arrived on the scene dressed as Venus on a magnificent river barge. Antony's eyes popped out, and he had a hard time running the examination because Cleopatra kept running feasts and entertainments. He was so captivated by her that he said, "Ah, forget it," and he went to Egypt with her where she bore him twin sons. She was his mistress as she had been Julius Caesar's before him.

**Octavian**

After that winter, Antony returned to Rome, leaving behind Cleopatra and the two sons. Antony married Octavian's sister, Octavia, in order to try to solidify peace between the two heads of the Roman Empire. In 34 B.C., Antony returned east on an expedition against the Parthians. He sent for Cleopatra, whom he married under Egyptian laws, and then proceeded to present many of Rome's eastern territories to Cleopatra and their two sons. This made Octavian, the ruler of the West, furious. So Octavian went to the Roman Senate; he secured the Senate's order to rescind the authority of Antony to rule; and, he declared war on Cleopatra. Antony and Cleopatra gathered 500 ships in order to fight Octavian, but Octavian blockaded them off the west coast of Greece in the Ionian Sea. Cleopatra slipped through the blockade. Antony had to make a decision whether to stay with his troops or follow her, and he decided to follow her. He slipped through, and the famous Battle of Actium took place in which the forces of Emperor Octavian defeated the troops of Antony who had gone with Cleopatra back to Egypt.

The next year, Octavian moved into Alexandria and brought it under siege. Cleopatra fled into the mausoleum that she had prepared for herself to hide. The word came back to Antony that Cleopatra was dead. He took a sword and thrust it into his chest. Another servant came along and said, "It was a mistake. She's alive." He ordered himself carried to the mausoleum, and he died in her arms. Cleopatra then committed suicide in turn. The tradition says that she ordered a basket of figs to be brought to her in which a poisonous asp had been put. As she reached into the basket, the snake bit her, and she died.

Octavian then had Caesar's son Caesarion executed to remove him from any competition to the throne. Octavian became the sole ruler of the Roman Empire. He took the name Caesar Augustus, which was the Caesar reigning at the time of the birth of Christ. Now all of this is the historical background that brings us to New Testament times. When Octavian returned to Italy, he wasn't going to let those partisans of Antony sit around, possibly to give him trouble. So he ordered all of them dispossessed of their properties, and he shipped them out. He shipped out these military people; these leaders; these administrators; and, these who had favored Antony. Guess where he exiled them to. Philippi. So here into Philippi came some very substantial kind of people, removed from Italy and brought into the Roman colony of Philippi. So this again gives us a picture of the complexion of the city against which this letter was written. To this city was granted the ... Rights or Law of Italy so that they could run their own affairs. Of course, the kind of people that had been exiled to Philippi made it very easy for them to do this.

Now this is the historical background. This is what existed when Paul came into that city and founded the church. This was the city in its functioning as he wrote to it. It was a totally different kind of city than Paul had ever been to before. Until he came to Philippi in Europe, he had ministered in Asia Minor. You will notice that when he came to Philippi, he and his party spent several days spinning their wheels trying to get the lay of the land because Philippi was a distinctively different kind of city than they had ever ministered in before. There was not even a synagogue to go to. They had to go down by the riverside just to find a prayer meeting of women.

**Geography**

This was a city also that, in many respects to Paul, would have been considered a northern city. Putting this in our terms, Paul was born in Tarsus, which is 37 degrees north latitude. That's like being born in Springfield, Missouri in our country. He was trained in Jerusalem which is 32 degrees north latitude, which would be like being educated in Montgomery, Alabama. However, Philippi was located 41 degrees north latitude, which is like going to New York City. So this is what Paul was experiencing. When he went from Asia Minor, it was like someone going from Montgomery, Alabama to New York City. It was a distinctive northern City. So in such a way, we have an insight, isagogically, to many features concerning the book of Philippians.

So here are some of the elements of isagogics. The New Testament authors wrote for their contemporaries, and they assumed that these people understood certain existing conditions and terms, and certain things they would say. They knew these people would understand it. These factors greatly affect the meaning of this book. It's like a letter between two close friends. You have a common ground of communication so you don't explain certain things that you will say in the letter that you know this person will grasp.

**Laws**

There were the laws of the time. Matthew 28:14 refers to the Roman law that a guard who falls asleep on duty is to be executed. This is why, when the Jewish leaders wanted the Roman guards to lie about the fact that Jesus was not in the tomb, they wanted them to say, "We fell asleep, and somebody stole the body." They said, "We will rid you of care." The phrase "rid you of care" means, "We'll take care of the law that says you are to be executed for falling asleep. We'll make it up with the governor."

In John 18:31-32, the Jews are told to take Jesus and deal with Him. The Jews said, "We can't deal with Him. We can't apply the death penalty. That has to come by order from the governor." Now to understand that, you have to know that rule for the order of the governor to apply the death penalty.

In Acts 16:35-39 and Acts 22:24-28, there was the law that a Roman citizen could not be whipped without a trial. That's why the Praetors were so concerned when they whipped Paul without trying him and without inquiring concerning the crime.

**Customs**

Then there were the customs of the times. Ecclesiastes 11:1 speaks about putting your bread out on the water, and it will come back to you. This refers to the fact that when fields were flooded, people would spread little seeds. The seeds would float; they'd sink to the bottom; the sediment would cover them; and, up would sprout the grain.

There was the custom of the brides veiling their faces from the groom until after they were married. Rebekah, as soon as she saw Isaac coming along, got off her camel and put on her veil (Genesis 24:64-65). Here she was going to meet the man that she's going to marry, and the first thing she does is put a veil over her face. Well, you didn't see a bride until after you were married to her. That was the custom of the time. Unless you understand that, you won't understand what the Scripture is saying. This is what happened between Laban and Jacob. This is how Laban got Jacob to marry his oldest daughter. Jacob didn't know who was under that veil. Consequently, the surprise was when you opened the box of Cracker Jacks to see what was the prize that was inside.

John 3:29 speaks about the friend of the bridegroom being happy to hear the pleased expression of the groom. What does that mean? Well, you didn't arrange a marriage yourself. Two people didn't get together and say, "Why don't we get married?" The parents arranged the marriage, or they sent a friend to arrange it. The friend or the parents had brought you a bride. It was after the marriage that the moment came to lift the veil and to see the bride. When the box of Cracker Jacks was opened and the prize was discovered, the friend was going to hear one of two things. He was either going to hear, "Heaven is good," or he was going to hear, "Good heavens."

Now all of this is isagogics. You can't understand these passages unless you understand the customs under which these people lived and which are not explained in Scripture because the people to whom these books were written were expected to understand this. So we have background of history, geography, and biology. All of these add clarification to the text.

**Exegesis**

Then the second thing is exegesis--these rules of Greek grammar. We want to look at that for a bit now.

**The Greek Language**

The original language of the New Testament was the Greek language. Remember that the Greek language of the New Testament, for example, was a divine provision. The history of the New Testament Greek language goes back to something like 1,500 B.C. It had several stages. The first was its formative period. That went from prehistoric times to about 900 B.C., the time of Homer. Primitive Greek tribes from the Aryan branch of mankind migrated into the peninsula of southern Europe known as Greece. The topography of Greece created geographic barriers which separated these tribes one from another. Consequently, it hindered their development into a national unity, and this resulted in many dialects of the Greek language. There were three basic dialects. One was the Doric; another was the Aeolic; and, a third was the Ionic. The ionic was the strongest of these.

Then there was the classical period that went from 900 B.C. to 330 B.C. The classical period was the period that carried the Greek language down to the time of the conquest of Alexander the Great. This was a period in which the Attic dialect gained supremacy. This was based on the old Ionic dialect. The best elements of the Doric and the Aeolic were brought together into it. It's called Attic because it was centered in Athens which was the capital of Attica. The ancient Greek literature that we have is in Attic Greek. This dialect reached its peak in the great Greek dramatists and historians in the 5th century B.C.--Sophocles; Aeschylus; Euripides; Plato; Herodotus; and, so on. The Attic Greek is the chief basis of our New Testament Greek.

Then we come to the Koine Greek which is New Testament Greek. That goes from 330 B.C. to 330 A.D. It means "common." It's the universal language of the streets. In this period, the Greek is used freely, and it's understood throughout the civilized world.

What were the reasons for the common use of the Greek language? There was extensive colonization. Why did the language spread? Because there was extensive colonization. Greeks had learned seafaring from the Phoenicians. They had become very aggressive as sea travelers. The Greek colonies were planted on almost all the shores of the Mediterranean. A strong colony was on the eastern coast of Italy near the center of the Latin world. There were close political and commercial ties between the Greek tribes.

Colonization and their mutual defense need created a sense of racial unity among these tribes. In the long struggle against the Persians, the Greek tribes were increasingly brought together for combat purposes. The result was that out of their relationships with one another evolved the Koine Greek language.

They had certain religious inter-relationships. All of the Greek tribes had their own gods, yet there was a sense of religious unity. They had a common reverence for certain pre-eminent gods like Zeus in their Pantheon. The Greeks established their national festivals around certain gods. Olympia, Delas, and Delphi where all religious centers devoted to certain gods. The inscriptions in these centers were in the leading dialects. It wouldn't just be one inscription. It would be several different dialects of the same inscription. Gradually people got used to seeing these, and they began to get used to getting the feel of each other's dialect. Finally, it was all brought to a head with the conquest of Alexander the Great. He brought the Koine Greek, in effect, into its full blossom of existence because of his conquests in 334 B.C. to 320 B.C. There was an extensive mingling of the dialects in his army from all the Greek tribes. This crystallized into the common Greek language of New Testament times.

When Rome conquered Greece, Rome was colonized, and Greek became the language of the civilized world. It was this Koine Greek that the civilized world spoke. For this reason, Paul could write his doctrinal masterpiece, the book of Romans, to the political center of the Roman world. He could write to Rome, and you might think he would write in Latin. No, he could write the book of Romans to Rome in Greek because this was the language that everybody spoke.

Now this was, of course, a divine provision. The Koine Greek was absolutely the most accurate; the most definitive; the most explicit; the most lucid; and, the most expressive language for communication that has ever existed. You have no idea what a tremendous language Koine Greek is. Once you do understand that, you have a deeper appreciation for the fact that the language was no accident. God was in all of this and He was preparing, over this formative period, this language for what He had to deliver in His final revelation. So this language is a marvel of philology, and it is one that we can interpret. We can understand what it's saying.

The final periods in the formation of the Greek language, bringing it up to today, included the Byzantine period from 330 A.D. to 1,453 A.D. This began when the Roman Empire was divided permanently into East and West. The Koine was affected by the fortune of the Eastern division from the headquarters of Constantinople. The modern period from 1,453 A.D. to the present, this is the Greek that you would hear on the streets of Athens today. It is closer to New Testament Koine Greek than it is to the classical Greek.

The analysis of the Koine Greek language was a problem that took quite a while to resolve--for us to put together on the basis of scholarly studies, what that New Testament language was like. It was once viewed as a special Holy Spirit language--some language that the Holy Spirit prepared and was used by the New Testament writers. Since then, scholars ... have shown that the New Testament Greek was the language of the masses of 1st century A.D.

We have sources of light on this Koine Greek. We have the Greek itself--the biblical Greek. We have the Septuagint Greek which is kind of a superior Koine. We have the literary Greek--not the classical Attic Greek--but that which was used by secular writers, and moved on toward the Koine type. We have the papyri which have extensive Koine records in them. We have the inscriptions on monuments which are in Koine. We have the broken pieces of pottery--the ostraca. And we have the Modern Greek which is the outgrowth of the Koine. It gives us some reflections on that.

**Greek Verbs**

I want to teach you something about the Greek verb. Verbs describe action. This is one of the most important features of the New Testament interpretation, but verbs are hidden in a translation. Verbs in Greek tell you some very significant things. Unless somebody says, "Here is the verb, and here is its structure," you won't know what this verb is saying. Any time the Greek language makes a statement in Scripture, it is important that you look at the verb, and you say, "What kind of action does that verb talk about?" Unless you know the kind of action, you'll miss most of what that verb is trying to tell us.

Now there are several other things about a Greek verb that are very important. These are words that you've heard us use, and I'm going to explain them in the next session, so that when you hear them, immediately in your mind, without your knowing anything more about the Greek language, you will understand what that verb is saying when you see it in the English.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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