

Ultimate Postscript, 2007

Hastening the Day of His coming.

This year has seen a further step toward the completion of this triple project. After 27 more years, finally, by God's grace, all three Bibles are in print, 'Old' and 'New' Testaments. The shipment of several tons of books at last arrived safely in the hands of the 'Abakaliki' people. The dedications have taken place. In this respect the prayers of many have been fulfilled.

In conclusion of this unending story, we need to report that Bible Translation is an activity that in one sense never comes to an end, neither locally, nor worldwide. As soon as one version is finished, the revisions begin for an improved edition at the horizon. In our shrinking modern world languages change from generation to generation. Bible Translation will have to continue until the Jewish Messiah returns to establish His kingdom on earth.

And when will that be? We find the answer in Acts 3:21, "the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." What are those 'things'? According to the 'Old' Testament, the prophets have announced four covenants with what came to be known as the Jewish people: the unconditional covenant with Abraham and his offspring (Gen. 12 and 15), the Land Covenant in Deut 30; the Davidic covenant in 2Sam 7 with its earthly kingdom centered on Jerusalem for ever as well as the sum total of these: the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31.

The Prophet Daniel outlined God's plan that would be revealed only in "the time of the end." (Dan 12:8-9) There is every reason to believe that this time has come with the 20th and the 21st century: the exponential increase of knowledge due to the computer age and the arrival of the global village with its mass travel, both of which are implied in Daniel's prophecies.

Numerous prophecies predicted the return of the Jews to their own land and the sufferings that would precede that event.

Jesus provided at least one other clue to these prophetic indicators: the Gospel must be preached to all the world and THEN the end will come. The Gospel is the whole Bible of which not a single Iota will disappear (specifically Jesus referred to the whole of the Torah in its larger sense). The question that must be raised with regard to the whole Bible is this: How many complete Translations (OT and NT) will be needed in order that the whole Gospel may have been preached to the whole world in a manner that its message will be comprehensible? Statistics of Bible Translation indicate that among the six or seven thousand languages on earth there are barely 1'200 who have a complete NT and of these only about 1/3 have a whole Bible. Even if not all of the 2'286 languages with probable needs known today are still in need of a whole Bible, the need for OT translation is evident from statistics quite apart from the inseparable link between the two parts of the Bible. The question may need to be raised: why has the OT been so much neglected?

The challenge for the end of time is at least two-fold:

- 1) **Translation of the Hebrew original.** Those who are best suited for this task are the Jews who were born in Israel. Romans 3:2 makes it clear that the message of the OT was confided to the Jews (just as the NT was) and according to Romans 9:4 the covenants are still theirs (present continuous tense). Since the Jews have been called to be the light of the world they still have a special calling among the other nations. If one reflects on these truths, is not the inescapable conclusion this: that every church on earth ought to pray for the Jews to accept their Messiah and thus to fulfill their destiny? Unless there is a massive influx of Hebrew (Ivrit) speaking Jewish translators the goal of allowing the whole world to know ALL that God has spoken through the mouths of the prophets from the beginning of the world, the end, is unlikely to be reached soon. Are we – Gentiles and Jews who believe in the Jewish Messiah - not called to hasten the day of His coming?

- 2) **A return to the Jewish roots of the Gospel,** not in the sense of a legalistic Judaization but in the sense of Hebrew thinking about God, man and history. This requires a change of attitude on the part of the leadership of the sending as well as of the receiving churches. The question why the OT has been so much neglected may well not have been one of pragmatism alone. The neglect had to do with the Greek mindset that soon replaced the Hebrew one in the early Church. Among other characteristics, for historic reasons, this led to allegorize the message of the prophets where it was not meant to be allegorized. Translating the OT without a change in relating the OT to the NT will not assure the use of the translation in order to promote a fuller understanding of God's plan for Jews and Gentiles at the end of the 'last days.'

August 2007