

February 23, 2020

Wresting the Scriptures (No. 1)

The apostle Peter wrote concerning the epistles of Paul *“in which”* in which he said *“are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction”* (2 Peter 3:16).

The word “wrest” means “to wrench, distort, pervert” (p. 378, **Analytical Greek Lexicon**, by Harper). It was stated that the “*epistles*” of Paul and “*also the other scriptures*” are wrested, distorted, or perverted. This is bad, because the participants in such do this “*unto their own destruction.*”

Who is guilty of this type action? The “*unlearned and unstable.*” Obviously, the “*unlearned*” are untaught and need to “*study*” in order to be “*approved unto God..., rightly dividing the word of truth*” (2 Tim. 2:15). The “*unstable*” are described as “not made firm; unsettled, unstable, unsteady” (p. 57 of **the Analytical Greek Lexicon**, by Harper). Such people are not “*grounded and settled*” in the faith and have “*moved away from the hope of the gospel...*” (Col.1:23).

An example of wrested scriptures is Ezekiel 37:16-19 in which “*the stick of Ephraim*” and “*the stick of Judah*” are mentioned. According to Joseph Smith, who founded the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (i.e., Mormonism), the book of Mormon is “*the stick of Ephraim,*” which would be brought forth and combined with the Bible (alleged to be “*the Stick of Judah*”) thus contradicting what the Scriptures teach regarding the all-sufficiency of the Bible (cf. Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jude 3; 2 Pet 1:3; Rev. 22:18-19), etc.)

Four things were herein assumed by Joseph Smith: (1) that “sticks” are books, (2) that the “*stick of Judah*” is the Bible, (3) that the “*stick of Ephraim*” is the book of Mormon, and (4) that people in general are gullible enough to swallow the first three assumptions.

However, the context in Ezekiel 37 suggests that “*Judah*” and “*Ephraim*” (which is synonymous with “*Israel*”) represented Judah (the Southern Kingdom) and Israel or Ephraim (the Northern Kingdom), which would come out of captivity and be restored to their land, which did come to pass. However, this is one of those instances in which prophecy had a dual fulfillment, in that it ultimately looked to the coming of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom He would establish. Indeed, God’s people would become “*one nation*” with “*one king,*” possessing “*one shepherd,*” having a “*covenant of peace,*” or an “*everlasting covenant.*” Of them, it was said that they shall “*be My people, and I will be their God*” (cf. Ezek. 37:22,24,26). This does not signify the combining of the book of Mormon with the Bible, but rather the breaking down of the “*middle wall of partition*” between Jews and Gentiles, their being made “*one*” in Christ (who is the “*one king,*” and “*one shepherd*”), the abolishing of the “*law of commandments*” (i.e., the Law of Moses) and the setting forth of “*an everlasting covenant,*” which is the “*the gospel of peace*” (Eph. 6:15), or “*the New Testament*”) of which Christ is “*the Mediator*” (Heb. 9:15; cf. Eph. 2:12-17; Col. 2:14; Heb. 8:6-13).

At least two things are characteristic of all false religions: (1) they are founded on assumptions, and (2) on an effort to direct men from the **all**-sufficiency of the Bible to the **ins**ufficient doctrines of men. Then to give respectability (?) to their error, they present a few Scriptures, but which they have wrested, perverted, and distorted. The Devil is a

master at this type of work, as was evidenced in the garden of Eden, and in the temptation of Jesus (Genesis 3:4; Matt. 4:6). However, it is still a mystery to me why people will deny the Bible, and then turn around and cite perverted passages from the Bible to give justification for the **un**biblical doctrines they teach! “Verily, the legs of the lame are not equal!” Let us diligently “*study*” to “*rightly*” divide “*the word of truth*” (2 Tim. 2:15), for therein is given the directions by which we may be safely guided from time to eternity!

*** —B. Witherington