

## **The Turtle Observed Pineth Away - James White follies**

### **THE TURTLE**

= turtledove

James White, in his book *the King James Only Controversy*, pokes fun at the King James Bible's use of the word "turtle" when referring to the turtledove. Mr. White says on page 235 in the section titled *Problems in the KJV*: "This is almost as humorous as Song of Songs 2:12, "The flowers appear on the earth: the time of the singing of the birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." Then Mr. White comments: "Turtles are not known for their voices, and how these would be connected with flowers and the singing of birds is unknown. Of course, the passage is not referring to turtles at all, but to the turtledove, as the modern translations recognize."

Mr. White himself does not believe any Bible in any language or any text, be it Hebrew or Greek, is the preserved, inspired words of God. Mr. White also works for the NASB committee and apparently doesn't mind representing a version like the NASB that says God can be deceived in Psalms 78:36, or that God doesn't take away life in 2 Samuel 14:14; or that there are two Gods, one not seen and one begotten in John 1:18; or that Jonah was not swallowed by a whale but by a "sea monster" in Matthew 12:40. Likewise, the NASB departs from the Hebrew texts scores of times and is continually changing its underlying Greek texts from one edition to the next; but he does have a bee in his bonnet with the KJB's use of the word "turtle" instead of turtledove.

Such are the ways of those who attack God's pure words as found in the King James Holy Bible. Here are a few facts James may not be aware of. The Hebrew word is translated both as turtle and turtledove in the King James Bible and several others too. One of the meanings of the word turtle is a turtledove, and the context always indicates that we are speaking about a bird and not the shelled reptile.

Here is another example of context clearly showing the Bible is speaking of a bird when it uses the word turtle. In Jeremiah 8:7 we read: "Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the TURTLE and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD."

It may surprise Mr. White, but not only does the King James Bible say "turtle" in the Song of Solomon 2:12 and in Jeremiah 8:7 but so also do Wycliffe 1395, the Geneva Bible 1599, Webster's 1833 translation, the Calvin Bible 1855, the Revised Version 1885, the Lesser Bible 1853, J.B. Rotherham's Emphasized Bible 1902, The Jewish Publication Society's 1917 translation, the 1936 Hebrew Publishing Company's "The Holy Scriptures", Young's literal translation 1898, the Douay-Rheims, the 1950 Douay version, the 1994 KJV 21st Century version, the 1998 Third Millenium Bible, the Holy Scriptures Jubilee Bible of 2000, the 2001 Urim-Thummin Version, The Holy Scriptures Jewish Publication Society 1997, the Revised Geneva Bible 2009, the Torah Transliteration Scripture of 2008.

You can see most of these Bible translations for yourself at this site here where you will find 160 English Bible translations -

<http://www.lookhigher.net/englishbibles/index.html>

Smith's Bible Dictionary

Turtle, turtledove *Turtur auritus* (Heb. *tor* ). The name is phonetic, evidently derived from the plaintive cooing of the bird.

Some dictionaries do not even list "turtle", meaning the turtledove, as archaic.

Webster's 1913 Dictionary *Tur*"tle noun. Anglo Saxon. *turtle*, L. *turtur*; probably of imitative origin. (Zoöl.) The turtledove.

Definitions from The Online Plain Text English Dictionary: *Turtle* \* (n.) Any one of the numerous species of *Testudinata*, especially a sea turtle, or chelonian. \* (n.) The curved plate in which the form is held in a type-revolving cylinder press. \*(n.) The turtledove.

A similar word in English that can have several meanings is the simple word *cow*. When we say *cow*, are we referring to the bovine creature that gives milk, or to a whale, a seal or an elephant? The context will usually tell us which one is meant. In every case where the word "turtle" is used in the King James Bible and all the others listed that have come both before and after the King James Bible, it is clear that the bird also known as the turtle dove is intended. Mr. White is again straining at gnats and mocking the time tested word of God as found in the King James Bible.

Here is the link to a short article by another King James Bible believer about the "turtle" being another word for the turtledove and how the English word itself is an onomatopoeic sound of the bird's call.

<http://www.kjvtoday.com/home/translation-issues/turtle-or-turtledove-in-song-of-solomon-212-et-al>

More about the winged turtle from the internet. Another Bible believer posted this article at one of the Bible clubs.

Turtles were mentioned several times in the works of Shakespeare.

Paulina in *Winter's Tale* refers to herself as a turtle:

"There's time enough for that;  
Lest they desire upon this push to trouble  
Your joys with like relation. Go together,  
You precious winners all; your exultation  
Partake to every one. I, an old turtle,  
Will wing me to some wither'd bough and there  
My mate, that's never to be found again,  
Lament till I am lost."

Perhaps if White professed to be a scholar of the English language, instead of a professed biblical scholar, he would ridicule Shakespeare for writing about flying turtles.

He might also have been inclined to ridicule Shakespeare for the words of Troilus who in *Troilus and Cressida* uses the metaphor of flight in reference to turtles:

"Troilus "O virtuous fight,  
When right with right wars who shall be most right!  
True swains in love shall in the world to come  
Approve their truths by Troilus: when their rhymes,  
Full of protest, of oath and big compare,  
Want similes, truth tired with iteration,  
As true as steel, as plantage to the moon,  
As sun to day, as turtle to her mate..."

Similarly he might declare Shakespeare to be stupid for the words of Petruccio and Katherine in *Taming of the Shrew*:

"Petruccio: O slow-winged turtle! shall a buzzard take thee?  
Katherine: Ay, for a turtle, as he takes a buzzard."

"Whoever heard of a winged turtle?" he could ask with an upraised nose and a snort. He might then take all of these passages and translate them into a modern dumbed-down English that he and his followers might be able to understand without having to rely on the use of too many brain cells.

Among the poems of Shakespeare that are separate from the 37 plays more or less attributed to him (38 for those who want to count *The Two Noble Kinsmen*) is *The Phoenix and the Turtle*. This poem was inspired by a much earlier poem of Chaucer's known as the *Parliament of Fowls* (*Parlement of Foules*). The whole poem is quite clearly about birds. Both die in the poem and the final verses are: "To this urn let those repair That are either true or fair; For those dead birds, sigh a prayer." I wonder if White would be able to figure out that turtle refers to a bird here. It seems obvious enough -- about as hard to miss as an ostrich in a chicken house -- but it is just as obvious in the Bible when examined in context. Seeing that White is unable to handle the KJV with its vocabulary of around 6,000 words, we can hardly expect him to be able to grasp the earlier English of Shakespeare's iambic pentameter verse, complicated prose sentences, and more than 20,000 words. We can, however, expect this so-called scholar to be able to use a dictionary

in his own language.

The very first definition in the Oxford Dictionary of "Turtle" is that of a turtle-dove. The reptile meaning is the second definition.

#### OBSERVED

Mark 6:20 King James Bible - "For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and a holy, and OBSERVED HIM; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."

James White criticizes the rendering of this verse in the KJB in his book *The King James Only Controversy*. In chapter 9 titled *Problems in the KJV* on page 224 Mr. White begins a whole series of objections to various King James readings.

He starts off by saying: "Well Nobody is Perfect. The men who worked on the translation of the AV nearly four hundred years ago were great scholars. No one can possibly dispute that fact."

Well, James, if this is so, then why do you spend 19 pages in this chapter trying to show how they completely dropped the ball and committed many unpardonable errors in their translation? And if they were "great scholars" as you say, and you place yourself in an assumed position to correct their many errors, then what does that make You? The Greatest scholar?

James continues: "BUT all great scholars know their limitations. They recognize their fallibility. And I really doubt they would take the slightest offense to a reasoned critique of their work. The first problem we will examine is to be found in Mark's gospel, chapter 6, verse 20:

KJV "For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and OBSERVED him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."

NASB (NKJV, NIV, ESV) "for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and KEPT HIM SAFE. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him."

Mr. White continues: "Did Herod "observe" John, as the KJV says, or "keep him safe," as the NASB says? The Greek term simply does not mean "observe" but instead means "to protect." One might possibly suggest that "observe" once meant "to protect", but such seems a long stretch, especially since the KJV renders the same word "preserve" at Matthew 9:17 and Luke 5:38."

Now, to address Mr. White's scholarly criticism.

The verb used here is *sunteereo* and is found only four times in the New Testament. Twice it is used in the sense of "putting new wine into new bottles and both are PRESERVED." Once it is used in Luke 2:19 where we are told: "But Mary KEPT all these things, and pondered them in her heart." The fourth instance is here in Mark where the KJB says Herod OBSERVED him.

Even the NASB give three different renderings to this single verb - "kept safe", "preserved" and "treasured".

All words in both Hebrew and Greek often have multiple meanings depending on the context in

which they are used. According to various lexicons and other translations, the KJB reading of "observed him" is totally accurate.

Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon, the seventeenth edition 1887 on page 680 lists the verb *sunteereo* and gives the following meanings. Number one on their list is "to watch closely"; then they list "to preserve, keep safe; and "to keep in mind". It also can mean "to watch one's opportunity".

Likewise A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, on page 800 lists among the various meanings of this verb: "to keep in mind, to be concerned about", and "to hold or treasure up in one's memory".

Joseph Henry Thayer's Lexicon the 19th printing 1978 also lists on page 606 one of the meanings of this verb as: "to keep a thing in mind (lest it be forgotten)".

Kittle's massive work, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Volume VIII page 143 also describes the verb *teereo* and its cognates as having the meaning of "to take note of", and "to observe".

Moulton, The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised, 1978,. page 392, has "to observe strictly" as a translation.

The verb *sunteereo* can have the meaning of to keep something together in the mind, and thus mean "to observe" something or someone. There are many similar verbs found in the New Testament that all versions translate with the idea of holding something in the mind.

See for example Luke 14:1 "they watched him" (*parateereo*); 1 Corinthians 15:2 "if ye keep in memory" (*kateko*), and John 1:5, and Ephesians 3:18 "to comprehend" (*katalambano*).

Not only does the King James Bible say that Herod OBSERVED HIM, but so also do the Primitive New Testament 1745, Webster's 1833 translation and the 1865 American Bible Union N.T. of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Many others give a similar meaning. Tyndale, Bishops' Bible, the Great Bible and the Geneva Bible say: "Herod gave him reverence". Thomas Howels 1795 A Translation from the Original Greek says: "paid great attention to him", Noyes Translation 1869 says "was regardful of him". Darby gives the marginal reading of "observed him". The Italian Diodati 1649 version says Herod "l'osservava" - observed him. Likewise the Italian Bible called Conferenza Episcopale says: "perché Erode temeva Giovanni, sapendolo giusto e santo, e vigilava su di lui". = But Herod feared John, knowing he was just and holy and he observed (or watched) him. The French Ostervald 1996 "un homme juste et saint; il le considérait" - he was a just man and holy and he considered him", French Martin 1744 - "et il avait du respect pour lui" and he had respect for him"; and the Spanish Sagradas Escrituras of 1569, the Reina Valera 1858 and 1909 say "le tenía respeto" - he had respect unto him.

James Murdock's 1858 translation of the Syriac Peshitta reads: "For Herod was afraid of John, because he knew him to be a just and holy man: and HE OBSERVED HIM, and gave ear to him in many things and did the things, and he heard him with satisfaction.

Matthew Henry comments on this passage: "He observed him; he sheltered him from the malice

of his enemies (so some understand it); or, rather, he had a regard to his exemplary conversation, and took notice of that in him that was praiseworthy, and commended it in the hearing of those about him; he made it appear that he observed what John said and did."

Here Matthew Henry recognizes the alternative understanding of the passage, but he favors the rendering as found in the King James Bible.

Likewise John Gill comments: "and observed him: or "kept him" in custody, in prison, as the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic render it; and did not put him to death, but preserved him from the designs of Herodias against him. Or he observed and took notice of what he had heard him say in his ministry; he laid it up, and kept it in his mind, and memory; the remembrance of which kept him in awe, and he durst not, and could not for the present, give heed to the solicitations of Herodias, or suffer her to take away his life: and he also observed his exemplary life and conversation, which was so just and upright, that his conscience would not admit him to give him up to her will and pleasure."

So we can see from this little study that when James White says emphatically, "The Greek term simply does not mean "observe" but instead means "to protect", he is merely giving us his own personal opinion, not hard facts. Others of equal or superior learning disagree with Mr. White's conclusions.

#### PINETH AWAY

Let's now look at the second objection James White brings up in his chapter called Problems in the KJV.

On page 225 James continues after his complaint about "observed him" versus "Kept him safe" in this manner: "A similar less-than-perfect translation is found at Mark 9:18.

KJV "And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, AND PINETH AWAY: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not."

NASB "and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth, and STIFFENS OUT."

(Here the NKJV, NIV and ESV read "becomes rigid".)

Mr. White continues: "It is difficult to get "stiffens out" or "becomes rigid" (NIV) from "pineth away". The KJV rendering is obviously less than adequate in comparison with the modern translations."

Now, to address this criticism.

First of all, the word used here is *xeraino* and has several meanings including "to wither away, to dry up, to be ripe, and to pine away". To pine away simply means to fail gradually in health or vitality or to waste away through grief, pain, hunger, etc. The word is frequently translated in all versions as "to wither", as in the fig tree or other plant withers. If a plant withers, it gradually loses its strength and vitality and shrinks in size. It first becomes limp, and only after it is dead does it become dry and rigid. The little boy in this case was not dead, but had for many years

been afflicted by the unclean spirit and his strength was pining away, as the KJB correctly has it. As a matter of fact, I have two earlier copies of the NASB right here in my study, and the 1963 and 1973 editions of the NASB translate this phrase as "and stiffens out" but then in a marginal note both add "Or, withers away".

Secondly, other scholars disagree with Mr. White as to the possible meanings of this word. In Joseph Henry Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon, 19th printing 1978 on page 432 Mr. Thayer says of the word *keepaino* that "of members of the body, to waste away, to PINE AWAY" and then he lists Mark 9:18.

Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, 1978, page 281, has "to pine".

Vine, *The Expanded Vines*, 1984, page 1236 has "pine away".

Thirdly, not only does the King James Bible say that the boy who had the dumb spirit "pineth away", but so also do Tyndale 1525, Coverdale 1535, the Bishop's Bible 1568, the Geneva Bible 1599, John Wesley's 1755 translation, Webster's 1833 translation, the Revised Version 1881, the American Standard Version 1901, Young's literal translation, Weymouth's translation 1902, the Douay-Rheims bible - "and gnasheth with the teeth, and pineth away", the Douay version 1950, the KJV 21st Century Version, and the Third Millennium Bible. There are two fairly well known translations of the Syriac, one done by Murdock and the other done by Etheridge and both have translated their text as "pineth away".

Other versions that read in a similar way are Goodspeed 1943, World English Bible, Hebrew Names Version, and Green's interlinear with "wastes away", and Darby's with "is withering away", the Rheims bible of 1582 said "he withereth", Rotherham's Emphasized Bible 1902 "weareth himself out", and the Bible in Basic English 1970 "his strength goes from him." Among foreign language bibles there are several that agree with the sense found in the King James Bible. Both the Spanish *Nueva Biblia Latinoamericana* of 2005 and the 1997 *La Biblia de las Américas*, both put out by the Lockman Foundation, which brings us the NASB, say: "cruje los dientes y se va consumiendo" = "he gnashes his teeth and is consumed (or pines away)", the Portuguese de Almeida of 1681 has: "e range os dentes, e vai definhando" = "he gnashes his teeth and is becoming weak" and the Spanish *Reina Valera Bibles* say "y cruje los dientes, y se va secando" = "he gnashes his teeth and is withering away (or drying up)".

John Gill comments: "and pineth away; his flesh is withered, dried up, and consumed away."

Matthew Henry also says: "and though the fits go off presently, yet they leave him so weak, that he pines away, is worn to a skeleton; his flesh is dried away."

Actually the first major English translation to render this word as "becomes rigid" was the liberal RSV, and since then the NRSV, NIV, NASB, ESV, and NKJV have followed this meaning. Again, Mr. White is dogmatically expressing his own opinion as to the correct meaning of the word used in Mark 9:18, but many others throughout history disagree with his conclusions.

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