

March 2010



## Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association

P.O. BOX 21, PALM SPRINGS, CA 92263-0021

### BIBLICAL GOLD

“California’s Gold,” with Huell Howser, is a travel series produced for Public Television. A few years ago, programs taped in the Palm Springs area, featured Huell driving an exotic red convertible. Soon after this he spoke one afternoon at our local library. Afterward, as we gathered around to shake hands with him, a young man asked if that was his car, to which he replied: “No; I work for PBS, not CBS!”

Just as real gold is usually hidden and has to be searched for, the idea behind the “California’s Gold” program is to find and explore interesting, out-of-the-way, less-known locations throughout California. So it is here. As we journey through the Bible, we will seek to discover biblical “gold”: nuggets of truth that may not be apparent on the surface, and which may require some digging to find and understand. Let’s begin!

In Matthew 6:27 (KJV) we read the words of Jesus: “Which of you by taking thought can add one *cubit* unto his stature?” A “cubit” is generally figured as 18 inches, sometimes more. Would anyone, except the shortest dwarf, want to be 18 inches taller? I am just over six feet; would I want to be over seven and a half feet tall? That would be almost a foot higher than the top of the average doorway!

There are good reasons to believe this verse refers to the length of one’s life, not his height. The Greek word translated “stature” (Strong’s, #2244) can also refer to the *age* of a person. It is so translated in John 9:23 concerning the man born blind: “He is of *age*; ask him.”

While words like “cubit” usually denote measurement in a literal sense, they can also be used of time and age. “Lord, make me to know...the *measure* of my days...Behold, you have made my days as an *handbreadth*; and my age is as nothing before you” (Psa. 39:4,5). Adam Clarke (1760-1832) has written that such word usage is found in *all* languages; and that “it is evident that the phrase of adding one cubit is proverbial, denoting something minute; and is therefore applicable to the smallest possible portion of time; but, in a literal acceptance, the addition of a cubit to the stature would be a great and extraordinary accession of height.”

For these reasons, translations like the *New International Version* (NIV) have worded it this way: “Who of you by worrying can add a *single hour* to his life” (Matt. 6:27).

As Jesus came from Bethany to Jerusalem, he was hungry. “And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he went to see if perhaps he would find something on it. And when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, *for the time of figs was not yet*” (Mark 11:12,13).

Those who make light of the Bible will zero in on a verse like this. “Why,” they question, “would Jesus suppose there would be figs on this tree when the time for figs was not yet? Was he so ignorant he did not know when figs get ripe?”

But there is a simple solution. It was not a question of when figs get ripe, but when they would be *harvested*. We can confirm this by comparing scripture with scripture. The same Greek word used here—translated “season” or “time”—is used in other verses to designate the time when fruits are harvested and received: “And at the *season*...that he might receive...of the fruit of the vineyard” (Mk. 12:2). “And when the *time* of the fruit drew near...that they might receive the fruits of it” (Matt. 21:34), “fruits in their *seasons*” (verse 41).

If the fig tree had not been barren, it would have had figs, as this was just before Passover. And, they would have still been on the tree, because “the *time* of figs [to be picked] was not yet.”

Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica: “Our exhortation did not come from deceit or uncleanness, nor was it in *GUILE*” (1 Thess. 2:3). The Greek word that is here translated “guile,” was originally a lure for catching fish. Because of this, some translations have, “we were not trying to *trick* you” or similar wording.

The claim has sometimes been made that when the Bible mentions dogs, only *wild* dogs—*scavengers*—are intended. Examples cited include the gruesome account of Jezebel’s body being eaten by dogs, leaving only the skull, hands and feet (2 Kings 9:33-37). But domesticated dogs, as pets, are also mentioned. “Even *the little dogs under the table* eat from the children’s crumbs” (Mk. 7:28, NKJV). That they were in the house, under the dinner table, implies they were household pets. The distinctive Greek word used here (Strong’s, #2952) means “little dogs.”

“If two of you shall *AGREE* on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them of my Father in heaven”

(Matt. 18:19). Of special interest here is the Greek word translated "agree." It is *symphoneo* (Strong's #4856), causing us to think, quite correctly, of the word symphony. It is as though a number of musical instruments are set in the same key and play the same tune. As used here, it speaks of an agreement of hearts, desires, and voices of two or more who join in prayer.

"Prepare to meet thy God" (Amos 4:12). This verse has commonly been used as a warning against sinful living, that the judgment day is coming, that people need to be ready to meet God. While this is true, that was not the original meaning. This verse has "no particular relation to the day of judgment, nor to the hour of death," writes esteemed biblical commentator Adam Clarke .

"This is a *military phrase*, and is to be understood as a challenge to come out to battle. As if the Lord had said, I will attack you immediately. Throw yourselves into a posture of defense, summon your idols to your help: and try how far your strength, and that of your gods, will avail you against the unconquerable arm of the Lord of hosts!"

These words were addressed to the people of Israel that had fallen into apostasy. Numerous disasters had swept across their land, but still repentance had not come. They were acting like they were stronger than God! So, in order to jar them into reality, God was pictured as challenging them to a fight: "Prepare to meet thy God." Imagine the folly of trying to fight against God, a point some Jewish leaders expressed even centuries later (Acts 5:38,39; 23:9).

In 2 Peter 1:20 we read: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any *private interpretation*." Quite often this verse is taken to mean we are not to inject our personal ideas into the Bible; that we are to take the Bible as it is written; that we are not to give our private interpretation about what it says. While this is true, of course, when we consider the context, it is not so much what WE do with the Scriptures, but what was already done. The prophets were inspired so that, WHEN THEY SPOKE, they did not give their private interpretation. Notice the connecting word "for." "No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. FOR the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

In 1 John 1:7 we read: "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, *we have fellowship one with another*, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin."

This is commonly taken to mean that we have fellowship, as Christians, with other Christians. While we believe in Christian fellowship, this does not appear to be the subject here. Notice verse 3: "Our fellowship is *with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*" (verse 3). Having said this, he goes on to say that when we have this fellowship with God, the blood of "his" son, Jesus Christ, cleanses us from all sin.

It has been called the *oddest* verse in the Bible, 1 Chron. 26:18: "At Parbar westward, four at the causeway, and two at Parbar."

Psalm 117 is the MIDDLE chapter of the Bible, with 594 chapters before and 594 chapters after it. What is of special interest is that the MIDDLE chapter is also the SHORTEST chapter in the Bible. It is a chapter of PRAISE:

Oh, praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples! For His merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the Lord endures forever. Praise the LORD!

The *longest* verse in the Bible is Esther 8:9, the *shortest* verse is John 11:35: "Jesus wept." It is generally known that Psalms is the *longest* book; but there is some question as to which is the shortest. If figured by verses, 2 John is the *shortest* (13 verses) compared to 3 John (14 verses). But if figured by the number of words, 3 John would be slightly shorter!

What we today call "books" of the New Testament, were actually letters. Some were addressed to *individuals* like Theophilus, Titus, Philemon, Timothy, etc. Others were addressed to *cities* where churches were located: Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, etc. The book of GALATIANS, however, is unique in that it was addressed, not to a certain city, but to Christians within a *country*. Apparently Paul had ministered there more than once: "He went over all the country of Galatia ...strengthening all the disciples" (Acts 18:23; also 16:6).

Sometimes a sermon may focus on a certain book of the Bible. I have preached a sermon on ALL the books of the Bible: "ROUTE 66." I placed a large mug with these words (the type sold in tourist shops along this famous old highway) on the pulpit for illustration.

The word "AMEN" has entered the English language from the Hebrew. It has the meaning of firm, solid, immovable. When one says "amen" to something, he is affirming his belief that it is solid and true. He is saying, "So be it." It is not well-known, but the words "amen" and "verily" are the *same* word in the Greek (Strong's, #281).

The gospels known as Matthew, Mark, and Luke all quote Jesus as saying, "*Verily*, I say unto you..."—one "verily." But John always *doubles* it, "*Verily, verily*, I say unto you..." (John 3:3,5,11, etc.). There are also examples of "amen" being doubled in the Old Testament (Num. 5:22; Neh. 8:6; Psa. 89:52).

In the Genesis account of creation, we know that on day one God said let there be light. Day two, God said let there be a firmament. Day three, God said let the waters be gathered. Day four, God said let there be lights in the firmament. Day five, God said let there be fish and fowl. Day six, God said let there be animals upon the earth. Having accomplished all this, he was about to create man. Up until now it was always, "And God said..." But now there is a striking change in wording: "And God said, Let US make *man*..." (Gen. 1:26).

I have heard it presented this way: Allowing for a human parallel, we might picture the president of a huge corporation. He makes many decisions on his own. But if something comes up that is especially unique, perhaps scary, he calls in his associates. They go over everything, and then he says, "Let US..." We are *not* suggesting that God needed advice, of

course, but the difference in wording certainly implies that when it came down to creating *man*, it was definitely unique!

Consider some of the great “*let us*” (“lettuce”) verses of the Bible, each one a great preaching text:

“*Let us* be glad and rejoice” (Rev. 19:7).

“*Let us* pursue the things which make for peace” (Rom. 14:19).

“*Let us* do good to all” (Gal. 6:10).

“*Let us* come boldly to the throne of grace” (Heb. 4:16).

“*Let us* go on to perfection” (Heb. 6:1).

“*Let us* run with endurance the race set before us” (Heb. 12:1).

“*Let us* love one another” (1 John 4:7).

Jesus said to the Jews, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor *and hate your enemy*’” (Matt. 5:43). The Jews had heard this; it was probably preached as though it were scripture. But nowhere did the Old Testament actually say to *hate* one’s enemy.

The other part, the part about *love*, was indeed scriptural: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18). It has sometimes been assumed that the concept of loving one’s neighbor began with the New Testament. But, obviously, it was also in the Old Testament. So, when Jesus said, “A *new* commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you” (John 13:34), the “new” part is found in the five words, “*as I have loved you.*” Here was love with a greater depth—he was willing to love so strongly, he would lay down his life for them (John 15:13; Rom. 5:7,8).

An interesting parallel: Moses had TWELVE men who served under him, and also SEVENTY others (Deut. 1:23; Exod. 24:1,9). Later, Jesus Christ, One greater than Moses, chose TWELVE men and also SEVENTY (Luke 9:1; 10:1).

The Bible mentions a king of Egypt named SO (2 Kings 17:4). Someone might ask: “Is that So?” and the reply: “Yes, that’s So.” There was a large city in Egypt named NO (Ezek. 30:14-16). I wonder if So ever went to No? I don’t know. In addition to a city named NO, Egypt also had a city named ON (Gen. 41:45).

AB in biblical usage means *father* and appears in various names, the best-known being Abraham. Initially called ABRAM (*father of elevation*), later, because of God’s blessing on his life, he was called ABRAHAM (*father of a multitude*). Other names with AB (father) include:

ABIATHAR (*father of abundance*),

ABIEL (*father of strength*),

ABIEZER (*father of help*),

ABIHAIL (*father of splendor*),

ABIMELECH (*father of a king*),

ABINADAB (*father of willingness*),

ABIRAM (*father of height*),

ABISHUA (*father of safety*),

ABNER (*father of light*), and

ABSALOM (*father of peace*).

AB also has linkage with the Heavenly Father. “We cry, ABBA, Father” (Mk. 14:36; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

The names Joseph, Joshua, Gideon, Solomon, and Daniel are well-known; not so well-known are their *other* names:

Joseph was called ZAPHNATH-PAANEAH (Gen. 41:45).

Joshua was called OSHEA (Num. 13:16; 11:28).

Gideon was called JERUBBAAL (Judges 8:35).

Solomon was called JEDIDIAH (2 Sam. 12:25).

Daniel was called BELTESHAZZAR (Dan. 1:7).

In English, we would not realize that the names Jacob and James are one and the same (see Strong’s #2384,2385). “James” is but the Greek form of “Jacob.” Had the Hebrew form been followed, we would have had the book of Jacob, rather than the book of James! I don’t believe it is true, but some have speculated that the translators of the King James Version felt obligated to use the name James (instead of Jacob) because this was the King’s name.

Everyone has heard of Samson. Not as well-known is the *meaning* of his name: “*Sunshine*.” Had they lived in our time, he might have liked to hear Delilah sing to him, “You Are My Sunshine”!

It is commonly assumed that Delilah, upon learning the secret of Samson’s strength, cut off his long hair. But, the fact is, a MAN did it—a good example of how we may read right over what the Bible actually says! (Judges 16:19).

This is true even about someone as well-known as Paul. Certain details tend to go unnoticed—like the mention of his *sister*. It was her *son*, a young man—Paul’s nephew—who was instrumental in helping Paul escape from a death threat at Jerusalem (Acts 23:12-22).

Bible students are familiar with the prophet Nahum and the book that bears his name. Also familiar is Capernaum where Jesus performed many miracles. But the linkage between the two is not as well-known: Capernaum (*Kaphar-Nahum*) means “Town of Nahum.”

“Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:19; 18:18). It is not uncommon for these words of Jesus, spoken to Peter and the other apostles, to mean that *they* could make rules and regulations that would be binding on the people of God. And, in so doing, heaven itself would back them up. Moreover, by extension, church leaders in the centuries that followed could do the same: what they say, becomes what heaven requires!

But as Charles B. Williams in his New Testament translation points out, the verbs used here are the future perfect passive tense. Careful to notice this tense distinction, he correctly translates as follows: “Whatever you forbid on earth must be what is *already forbidden in heaven*, and whatever you permit on earth must be what is *already permitted in heaven*” (Williams, New American Standard, Amplified, etc.). This wording provides an important clarification.

When Jesus said, “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” it is the same idea. God’s will in the full sense of the term is already done in heaven. When it is done on earth—whether past, present, or future—it reflects what is already a heavenly reality.

Jesus said, "If you ask ANYTHING in my name, I will do it" (John 14:14). Some suppose this means they can ask for anything *they* want—all kinds of worldly possessions, the finest home, the fanciest car, an expensive yacht, and riches! This was *not* what Jesus meant. The disciples, to whom he spoke these words, had a challenging and extensive mission ahead of them: to take the gospel into all the world. He promised to supply anything they would need—anything they would need to accomplish this purpose.

Consider this: The owner of a huge ranch, upon hiring a worker to put up a fence along a remote part of his property, might instruct him: "Here is a pickup truck you can use. It is loaded with fence posts, a large supply of wire, and various tools. Also, inside the truck is a cell phone. If you need *anything*, just call me and I will see that you get it." By "anything," he would obviously mean anything that would be needed, within the context of that conversation.

For proof that this is the way John (who recorded these words) understood this "anything" promise of Jesus, may be seen in what he later wrote: "If we ask ANYTHING *according to his will*...we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5:14,15). It is *his* will—not our will—that is important.

Even Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, facing the death of the cross, prayed: "Not as I will, but as you will." The cup of death was not removed, but "for the joy that was set before Him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Matt. 26:39; Heb. 12:2). Because He lives, we can live also—*forever!*



In this photo Arlene and I are wearing our matching Hawaiian outfits. Over the past twenty-five years I have had the opportunity and joy to speak numerous times at churches in Hawaii.

**Offerings for the support and continuation of this ministry will be gratefully received. Numerous articles are posted on our website: [www.ralphwoodrow.org](http://www.ralphwoodrow.org), also ordering information for the 16 books we publish (over 1,650 pages). A printed color catalog is available upon request.**

**Ralph and Arlene Woodrow, P. O. Box 21, Palm Springs, CA 92263-0021**

**E-mail: [ralphwoodrow@earthlink.net](mailto:ralphwoodrow@earthlink.net)**

**Toll Free order line: (877) 664-1549**

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Palm Springs,  
CA  
Permit No. 9

Ralph Woodrow  
Evangelistic Association, Inc.  
P.O. Box 21  
Palm Springs, CA 92263-0021  
Return Service Requested