

# SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER    ISA.55:10    FOR THE EATER  
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

## THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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### WHAT DOES *METANOEO* MEAN?

Having presented in Issue No. **SB106** the problem in regard to the word "repent" we are now ready to consider the true meaning of the Greek word that is so translated. Dr. A.T. Robertson says that the word *metanoeo* "has been hopelessly mistranslated," and further declares "that the tragedy of it is that we have no one English word that reproduces exactly the meaning and atmosphere of the Greek word. "

When a student of the Word of God comes upon a situation where there is no English word that will express the meaning and nuances of the Greek word under consideration, he is then forced into the somewhat difficult situation of using as a translation some word that comes as near as possible to representing it, then using other closely related words as the context of various occurrences demand. However, great care must be exercised so that the word selected does not misrepresent the word under examination. The word "repent" in no way represents the Greek word *metanoeo*. It is a total misrepresentation. An important truth is lost as long as this word is used to cover it up.

The Greek verb *metanoeo*, which is always mistranslated "repent," is made up of a combination of two simple, easily understood words. These are *meta*, which means "after," and *noia* which means "mind." All who labor in the healing arts, such as doctors and nurses, will know at once the meaning of *meta* and *noia*. Since this word is a verb, it would mean to a Greek of the first century "have the after-mind;" and the noun of course would name the result of such an action, which would be "after-mindedness."

Knowing that this is what the Greek means, I began a long search for some word in the English that would set forth these ideas. Various words were tried and found to be unworkable. I finally hit upon the words submit and submission and decided these could be used as good, basic, representative translations. I asked various fellow students to put these words to the test to see if they were workable and productive in bringing forth truth. They did this and found them to be so, shedding light on passages that had been quite dark heretofore. However, we found that these words had their limitations, and they seemed to create problems in certain passages where *metanoeo* and *metanoia* were found. But, keeping in mind Robertson's words that: "we have no one word that reproduces exactly the meaning and atmosphere of *metanoeo*," we adopted three closely related and congruous words in order to express the truth in all contexts. These three words are submit, yield and ease.

Some who are bound up to the impossible idea of "one translation for each word" may object to the use of three words, but I refuse to accept the bondage of any such unworkable theory. Anyone who has ever endeavored to turn Greek into English will know that Greek has many words for which there are no exact English equivalents. When we come upon these, we must use several words that

are basically related, even though not strictly synonymous, in order to express the truth. An example of this is the word *gune*, which means "woman." However, in translating we come upon occurrences where the word "woman" simply will not fit, and word *wife* is needed. With these two words, *wife* and *woman*, the translator can give the true meaning of every occurrence.

Even so it is with the word *metanoeo*. To express the truth in all passages and contexts, we need the words *submit*, *yield* and *ease*. These words are related, they are congruous, and they do the work. The reader will understand that *ease* is used in the sense of unburden or disburden. This is important since all sin and guilt are in Scripture viewed as being heavy and oppressive burdens. **"Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden,"** is the invitation of the Lord Jesus to men to submit to Him, and thus to ease themselves of their burden of sin and guilt (Matt. 11 :28).

In order to understand why the words *submit* and *submission* have been chosen to represent *metanoeo* and *metanoia*, we will need to give careful thought as to what the verb phrase "have the after-mind" means, also to the ideas that are set forth by the word 'submit.' We will consider some pertinent examples.

Joshua called for complete submission on the part of the children of Israel when he demanded: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." It was the time for decision and commitment. Some in this great company were still clinging to the gods their fathers served in Egypt (Josh. 24:14,15), but this could be tolerated no longer. Complete submission without recourse or qualification was now demanded. Joshua revealed his own complete submission, shutting out any future modification by saying: **"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."** His mind that day would be his mind tomorrow. He had the after-mind.

Ruth revealed her complete submission to Naomi when she said: **"Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God"** (Ruth 1:16). This was her declared mind at that moment. No matter where Naomi went, no matter where she resided, no matter what adverse circumstances should arise-Ruth would be her companion. Nothing but the death of one of them could change their relationship. Her mind and purpose she had before her declaration of loyalty, and before she knew what the circumstances might be, would be just the same after these became evident. Her attitude was what a first century Greek would call *metanoeo-having* the after-mind. Hers was true submission, not subject to any alteration. The Greek name for such an attitude was *metanoia*, after-mindedness.

If someone should say, "I will go tomorrow if it does not rain," he is declaring that his present mind is to go; but in case of rain, he will change his present mind so that his "after-mind" will no longer be the same as his "fore-mind." If someone in authority over him should reply: "Make up your mind, either to go or not to go, rain or shine," he is demanding that he have the same mind tomorrow as he has today. He is demanding that today's mind and tomorrow's mind be the same-that he have the after-mind.

In Matt. 8:19 we read of one who had the fore-mind to follow Christ, and declared it, but he seemed to lack the "after-mind." We find: **"A certain scribe came, and said unto Him, Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest."** But when the Lord revealed His poverty, so total that He had no place to sleep that night, his "after-mind" did not match his "fore-mind." At least we never hear of him again.

An example of complete submission, where "fore-mind" and "after-mind" were identical, is seen in the prophet Daniel. Submitting only to God, it was his determination not to defile himself in Babylon, and to maintain his prayer contacts with God. This was before the royal decree was signed that no man could ask anything of any God for thirty days. And if anyone did, he would be cast into a den of lions. But no den of lions could alter Daniel's mind or purpose. He had the "after-mind" before he knew what the consequences might be.

With all these facts in mind, we now come to John's demand made to Israel before Jesus began His ministry. I would translate Matthew 3:2: **"Submit, for the government of the heavens has**

**drawn near."** And indeed it had drawn near, for within three years it would be a reality, even though only like the blade stage of growing grain. (See Issue No.**SB048**). Those who submitted in advance without knowing what the cost would be would indeed receive great reward.

It has long been imagined that John was declaring the whole duty of man toward God, a veritable complete plan of salvation from sin for those who came to him in the wilderness of Judea. This has caused men to try to read much more into this first occurrence of *metanoeo* than is actually there. In view of this, there are those who say that the word *submit* falls short of saying what God expected of men, and that *submission* is an insufficient statement of what John's disciples did.

This is true! But if it is true of "submit," it is also true of *metanoeo*. If not, why then did the Lord Jesus say in Mark 1: 15: **'Submit, and believe the gospel.'** Submission without qualifications was only the first step, a most vital step, but it was only the start. Submission must precede belief.

Paul preached: **"Submission toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ"** (Acts 20:21). Later he said he had demanded of the Gentiles three things: **"that they should submit, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance"** (Acts 26:20). Peter told the men of Israel that they should: **'Submit and turn about'** (Acts 3:19). The additional statements made in all these proclamations show that to submit is always the initial step and only the initial step. Much more than submission is required, but this must be set forth by additional statements. It is not included in the word *metanoeo* or in the word *submit* .

John the Baptist came as the Lord's forerunner proclaiming the nearness of God's government, making ready for the appearance of the One on Whose shoulders the government would rest (Isa. 9:6). John did not say, "Repent of your sins"; or, "Repent, or you will be lost forever"; or, "Repent and you will be saved." The sole reason given as to why they should submit was that God's government was impending. When sovereignty is assumed and a government imposes itself upon men, they can either submit or resist. The demand made by John fit the situation perfectly at that time. Divine government was coming; it was impending; and all in Israel were called upon to submit, to yield, to offer no resistance, to make no moves contrary to it, to erase themselves of every factor that might block their entrance into it (See Matt. 18:8,9), to wait for further orders from the One who would be the King of the Kingdom.

Their submission, being voluntary and in advance of the actual establishment of God's government upon the earth, would result in a similarity of mind between God and His people Israel. They were to yield their minds irrevocably to the power of another.

The Apostle Paul provides an excellent example of the after-mind, that is, submission in advance of knowing what the requirements would be. As soon as he discovered Who was speaking to him, his immediate response was: **"Lord, what will you have me to do"** (Acts 9:6). He stood ready to do whatever the Lord might say. Even the vision of all that he would suffer did not alter his mind in the least. Truly, this man had the after-mind. He was submissive.

Our available space has been used up, but another study will be needed to examine difficult passages where *metanoeo* is found.

**End – Issue No. SB107**