

What I Do When I Write

Commentary for June 16, 2017 — ... and Why I Do it

When I write an article, a newsletter, a commentary like this one, or whenever I create a presentation from Dr. Ernest L. Martin's works or my own, I do so using elements of style that I have chosen for a reason. They are useful and purposeful.

The Focus Is on Scripture

The publications of ASK, the Associates for Scriptural Knowledge, have always been based on Scripture and its teaching. Everything written or spoken has been created to explain the Word of God as clearly as possible. For example, look at a short passage by the apostle Paul who concludes a presentation about faith with this statement:

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

• *Romans 10:17*¹

I highlight this short verse by indenting, **bolding**, and **coloring** the text to show the direct importance of God's Word to the message I want to convey. I also underline and **shade** words within the passage to highlight their importance within the verse. The Word of God is always of central importance.

Ideally, I could string verses in a list and assume the audience would understand the nuances of what I am trying to communicate. The problem is, the passages would be read by very few, and even if they did so, they might not understand the chain of evidence as I do. Nor would I understand someone else's "list" of verses in the way they intended. Therefore, I try to explain the context before and after the biblical passages.

There is another way I separate thoughts and subjects in my writing or in my edits of Dr. Martin's writings or tapes. I use Subheads (like "*The Focus Is on Scripture*" above) to signal a change of subject and separate larger subject areas. It gives the reader a reason to pause, think about what he just read and prepare his mind for a different topic. I use bulleted or numbered text paragraphs, usually indented to highlight text in yet another way to emphasize important concepts. Simple is better in my view. All these are simple typesetting practices that suffice — again — to focus the attention of the reader on the Scriptures.

¹ I was confused by this verse for a long time. What did it mean? I did not become a believer in Christ's resurrection and work of salvation through hearing God's Word through preaching, I was converted through reading the Scriptures. I attended a lecture by Professor Paul Achtemeier titled "[Omne verbum sonat: The New Testament and the Oral Environment of Late Western Antiquity](#)," his Presidential Address to the 1989 Society for Biblical Literature Conference. He pointed out that written documents in the ancient world of that era were composed to be heard by an audience. Read my June 2006 Commentary, "[Faith Comes by Hearing](#)." When you study Scripture, read it aloud to hear God's Word.

Charts, maps, and graphs are other ways to break up long sequences of text, but only because they help explain the central message of the Scriptures under consideration.

Basic text, indented quotes, subject heads, bullets, spacing, and side-by-text (as in the Israel and Judah series of articles) are the simplest of techniques to bring clarity to the biblical text. The use of color in ASK articles is also intended to focus your attention on the Scriptures being discussed, as well as giving an attractive appearance to the entire document, especially articles.

Editing Dr. Martin's Work, and Expanding It

It has been my intention always to present the ideas, words, and purpose of Dr. Martin's research, writings, and audio presentations (transcribed and transformed into articles) as faithfully as possible. The early material produced by Dr. Martin from the Foundation for Biblical Research contained much valuable material, although it was necessary to update that material so it would be in line with his later understanding of biblical and secular history.²

Editing the FBR and updating the ASK material necessitates changing words for the sake of clarity, removing repetition, updating sources, footnoting supporting information, expanding biblical quotes to give more context, rechecking Dr. Martin's quotes from secular sources, correcting typographical errors (and adding my own unintentionally), and adding new information discovered by others supporting Dr. Martin's research. This all involves detailed work.

Those who publish Dr. Martin's early material do so against his wishes expressed before his death. Besides copyright infringement issues, there is the moral issue that those who publish older material (and then comment on it) must live with their actions. On my part, I have kept faith with God's Word and promoted Dr. Martin's understanding of doctrine, with which I totally agree. The factual and historical differences I have with Dr. Martin's views are clearly explained so the reader or listener can make up their own mind.

Finally, I write my own material using Dr. Martin's mass of research as a basis, supported with information learned from my Seminary and personal studies, as well as on-the-job experience doing line editing for the Seminary professors for nine years. Most of all, my writing is done by standing on Dr. Martin's shoulders.

It has been my joy to work with ASK for some 14 years. God willing I will continue this work.

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² For example, I could not republish large sections of his earlier material after Dr. Martin had changed his mind on a subject (which he did often). His Temple research beginning in 1994 would be diminished if I published information where he states the Temple was on the Haram esh-Sharif. This would be both confusing and the earlier material would be used against him by enemies of his latest research.

For example, I note that several recent scholars who published their own Star of Bethlehem research like to quote earlier editions of *The Star that Astonished the World* rather than the latest 1996 edition. This indicates an updated literature search had not been done, reflecting on their academic standards.