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“Put on the whole armor of God”

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Artist’s depiction of the women coming to Jesus’ tomb early on the first day of the week

The Underlining **SIGN** Proving Christ’s Messiahship

Jesus was asked for a **sign** by the religious leaders of His day. He responded by stating they were an evil and adulterous generation seeking after a **sign**, adding there would be no **sign** except the **sign** of Jonah. Why do you think He referenced that?

By **BILL WATSON**

John the baptist, Jesus’ relative (*may have been a second or third cousin*), was also interested in knowing if He was indeed the Messiah. So John sent his disciples to ask Jesus if He was the One to come or if they should look for another (Luke 7:18–23). Upon being convinced from what his disciples told him, the baptist conceded, Jesus must increase while he decreases (John 3:26–36)—Jesus was the One to come, as

far as the baptist was concerned!

Jesus, during a trip through Caesarea Philippi, addressed His disciples with a question, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” Some of them responded with different names, but then He rephrased the question more specifically: “But whom say YOU that I am?” At this point Simon Peter abruptly declared, “You are the Christ [*the anointed*], the Son of the living God.” Jesus favored this declaration with a blessing, complimenting this unwavering

recognition—this confident and undoubting faith in Him to build His Church. Peter just happened to verbalize it!

However, Thomas was somewhat more cautious about embracing the idea Christ was in fact the Messiah. After being told they had seen Jesus alive and had talked with Him, Thomas said, “Until I see in His hands the nail imprints and put my finger in the holes, as well as my hand in the wound He suffered after being stabbed, **I will**

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Character Counts, Character Costs

By **KENROY ALLEN**

We live in a world that idolizes celebrities with appealing personalities but care far less about their character. In recent times we have seen many influential public figures, including religious leaders, fall from their grandeur of loftiness and prominence because of character

flaws. We are all influenced by the world in good ways and bad ways. The Bible gives us examples of good character to emulate and bad or weak ones to avoid.

What is Character?

Character is the mental and ethical values and principles that define an individual and by

which they live. Dwight Moody once said, “*Character is what you are in the dark.*”

Our true character is seen when no one is watching us. Because what is done in the dark will eventually come to light. “Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you

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Biblical Slavery

By **MIKE JAMES**

One of the many criticisms of Christianity is that the God of the Bible endorses slavery. One critic, John Armstrong, says the following in his book, *God Vs. the Bible*: “According to the Bible, the survivors of the tribes that were overrun by the Israelites were enslaved. Does the Bible endorse slavery? Absolutely! There was a reason southern plantation owners felt quite comfortable with owning slaves and being Christian at the same time.”

As with any information, there are usually a few ways to analyze that information. Mr. Armstrong is equating slavery in the Bible with North American slavery from the 16th to the 19th century. He fails to mention distinctions between these systems and is ignorant of why God would allow slavery to exist within ancient Israel. Let’s take a closer look at this topic and see what we discover.

First of all, it was a normal cultural thing for warring people or tribes to make their defeated opponents slaves in ancient times. Israel was also permitted by God to buy heathen slaves during Old Testament times.

Secondly, we need to remember God has a long-term strategic plan. When His kingdom takes over rulership of this earth things will begin to be set in order. God’s purpose was not to set things in order during human history.

Thirdly, some of the laws in the Old Testament pertain to circumstances that were extant at that time and place. God had some law on polygamous relationships because that was a cultural norm for some at that time. For example, **Exodus 21:7–11** and **Deuteronomy 21:15–17** are laws regulating polygamy. But we know from the beginning (**Genesis 2:24**) God wanted one man with one woman. Jesus confirms this in the New Testament in **Matthew 19:1–6**. Let’s also remember **Galatians 3:28** which makes it clear God’s intention is for all

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SIGN*Continued from p. 1***not believe!”**

And so, eight days later Jesus shows up again, appears in a room again, without using the door, and proceeds to present Thomas with the opportunity the doubting apostle had requested, that he might believe. The result: *he surrendered and accepted Jesus Christ* to be his Lord and God (John 20:28). It was quit an event in the life of Thomas and for the rest of the disciples to witness.

The Search for Evidence

So, here we see three different men, John the baptist, Peter, and Thomas, all recognizing events they witnessed, which proved evidential for validating the Messiahship of Jesus. Obviously, what they *saw and heard* became very convincing to them that Jesus was the Messiah. And, interestingly enough, the many additional things they witnessed that are *not written in the book*, also clearly served to substantiate His Messianic identity, proving the “*spirit life*” Christ was offering them (John 20:30) to be trustworthy. These events were so awe-inspiring that they were willing to die a martyr’s death to preserve their future destiny Christ displayed and presented for forty days after He rose from the dead!

The apostle Paul had a similar situation in his life. But, in his case, it was a life changing experience; his life was actually interrupted with a *supernatural intervention* Jesus personally conducted and designed to give Paul opportunity to change his life from persecutor to advocate for the church. And that is exactly what happened on his trip to Damascus; Christ personally introduced Himself (Acts 9:1–18)! It turned Paul’s life “upside down” and caused him to completely cease all aggression he was legally commissioned to conduct against the church. *It was a miraculous turn of events for Paul!*

So often in our lives, we look for “*signs*” of proof that God exists. It’s not uncommon for human beings to doubt the existence of God and, of course, the legitimacy of Jesus Christ’s Messiahship and Him being alive at the right hand of God the Father as a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek! Unquestionably, this is why

it’s *very important to prove* God exists and Jesus Christ is His first-born Son, serving as Savior (propitiation, or atonement) for mankind (1 John 2:1–2).

Yet, because very few miracles occur on the scale of Christ’s time, we are forced to look elsewhere. And the best place to start our search is to connect up with our Bibles—God’s Word—for the faith-building insight we need! It is here—in our Bibles—where we are *directed specifically*, to a “*sign*,” which is a validating “*signature of evidence*,” proving Jesus Christ is indeed the Savior and High Priest for mankind, intervening on our behalf to the Father.

That specific sign was the event of Jonah in the belly of a GREAT fish. This story explains Jonah was in this fish for “three days and three nights” (Jonah 1:17). Let’s review this Hebrew statement, just to be sure it actually means what it says; and then, perhaps, we can understand the *reason* Jesus used it as His *confirming sign*.

The word “three” comes from the Hebrew *sh-loshah*. This word means three, third, or a multiplicative as thrice. **It means three!** The word “days” comes from the Hebrew *yom*. It is indicative of the warm hours, the day, from sunrise to sunset. It can be used for other meanings, too, but context is important in every area as it is here, when making the contrast between day and night.

Now the word “nights” in the Hebrew comes from *lay-lah*. The proper meaning is a twisting away from the light—that is, night. It comes from a similar Hebrew word, *lool*. It means to fold back, a spiral steep, or winding stair and connects up with the Hebrew *lulaah*. This simply means loop. So, the concept of understanding the Hebrew, when contrasting between *yom* and *lay-lah*, is basically *three periods of time* that are defined as three (3) days, followed by a twisting away from light, which means three (3) nights.

This has nothing to do with “parts” of days or nights, as though it were a Hebrew idiom. *Clearly, we are not talking about idioms!* Instead, we are talking about three *whole periods of time* that include three days (*yom*) and three nights (*lay-lah*)! There is no doubt about this interpretation. Jonah was in this GREAT fish for a space of time we understand to be about a 72-



hour period!

This is what Jesus understood the Hebrew to mean and is exactly *why* He chose it as a sign for His Messiahship—this was a *prophetic statement!* It’s also fair to say Jesus spoke Hebrew and knew exactly what and why He referenced this story of Jonah and the great fish.

Unpacking Jesus Christ’s ‘Sign’

In Matthew 12, we find the story about the “sign” requested by the scribes and Pharisees. Surprisingly, after all the signs Jesus had been giving, from healings to providing sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf—even raising the dead—they had the *audacity* to request a “sign,” as though He hadn’t shown enough to prove His “*Pedigree*.” It’s no wonder Christ immediately calls them an evil and adulteress generation. They were all so smug, arrogant, and self-righteous in their *virtue* signaling—and Jesus called them out on it!

But in answering the question, He proceeds to explain the story of Jonah and refers to “two major proofs” contained within this illustration. The *first one* concerns the “time” He would be in the heart of the earth and, *secondly*, the fact Jonah would “rise” in the judgment day and He (Christ) was greater than Jonah (Matthew 12:38–41). So, we have two considerations: **A)** the time He would be in the heart of the earth, and **B)** He would raise His temple—a metaphor for His body.

Notice, the parallel record of this discussion in John’s Gospel: “Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign show you unto us.... Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple and in **[A]** three days [time] I will **[B]** raise it up. Then said the Jews, forty-six years was this temple in building, and will you rear it up in three days? But he spoke of the *temple of his body* [phys-

ical, fleshy, human body]” (John 2:18–21).

In this narrative we plainly see two major “proofs” to consider—*time* and the *resurrection*—for validation of His Messiahship. This becomes critical and very important *evidence* that Jesus Christ is the *propitiation of mankind*. Both items stand together—the length of time and confirmed eye witnesses of the “actual resurrection” of His body, which means His life after death! This is a *comprehensive understanding* to the “sign” Jesus chose to prove His Messiahship! Unfortunately, the vast majority of Christians today deny this *dual segmented* “sign” by observing the alleged Christian holiday, Easter. (Please request, or download the free article: *How Was Passover Replaced by Easter?*)

The facts are, Jesus Christ was crucified early morning on the day part of the 14th of Nisan and gave up His breath (Greek: *pneuma: breath, mental disposition, life*)

(John 19:30) at about 3:00PM in the afternoon (Mark 15:33–37), when the Passover lambs were being killed for the “Jewish celebration” of Passover, commencing on the first *high day of Unleavened Bread* (John 19:31).

What most people don’t recognize is there were *two Sabbaths* positioned within the three days and three nights period in which Christ was in the tomb. There was the first Day of Unleavened Bread, which was bearing down on those that crucified Him, and the usual weekly Sabbath Day. The reason they had to hurry was because the annual High Holy Day Sabbath was approaching and no bodies should remain on the stakes during the Sabbath Day (John 19:31).

So Joseph of Arimathaea, a secret disciple of Jesus, appeals to Pilate for the body. Pilate concedes and allows Joseph to have it. Nicodemus, a Pharisee, helps Joseph place Christ’s body into a sepulcher (above-ground tomb) since it was close at hand, and as some scholars suspect, may have belonged to Joseph, or at least, perhaps, his family (Matthew 27:60). But the point is, they place Jesus’ body in this tomb as the sun was setting, commencing the first Day of Unleavened Bread (John 19:38–42).

Now, let’s turn to other gospels to identify the weekly Sabbath in this sequence. Luke’s gospel explained this happened on what the Jews

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considered a “preparation day” (Nisan 14th) to the First Day of Unleavened Bread (Luke 23:54). The women followed, marking where the body was being placed and returned to their homes to prepare spices and ointments and rested the Sabbath day; **but consider this**—“according to the commandment” (Luke 23:55–56)? Which commandment? The one pertaining to the High Holy Day, or the weekly Sabbath?

In Mark, we begin to get some clarity. We find a description of how they initially wrapped Jesus’ body in linen and closed up the tomb. The women watched and noted where He was entombed, intending to return later for preparing His body for burial with spices and ointments (Mark 15:43–47). But notice Mark 16:1: “And when the *sabbath* was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him,” which was going to be on the first day of the week. So, there had to be a non-Sabbath day(s) between the annual and weekly Sabbaths so they could shop, obtain the spices, and get prepared. Because we know they came to the tomb early the first day (Sunday), before dawn (Mark 16:1–2).

Also, consider this Greek word *Sab-bat-on* that’s translated to the English word “Sabbath.” Interestingly, it is used many times throughout the Bible to indicate plurality of Sabbaths. It is used in Matthew 12:10, 12; Mark 3:4; Luke 4:31; 6:1–2; Acts 17:2; and Colossians 2:16. In all these scriptures the Greek

word *Sab-bat-on* is used to illustrate plurality. So, we can easily understand if the women are at the tomb early on the first day of the week (Mark 16:2), then the word “Sabbath” mentioned in verse one must include both Sabbaths. Keep in mind, this could have easily been more accurately translated into the English word *SABBATHS*, thus taking into account both Sabbaths—the High Holy Day and weekly Sabbath.

In addition, we have an exclusive event described only in the book of Matthew—the posting of military guards outside the tomb. This was to insure the body couldn’t be stolen, due to rumors about the possibility of Jesus’ claim He would rise from the dead. They didn’t want that body stolen within that three day period (Matthew 27:62–66). So they sealed the tomb and posted Roman military guards outside it. This all occurred the next day (the High Day Sabbath—John 19:31), following the preparation day (Nisan 14). This would have been the first Day of Unleavened Bread—Nisan 15.

In Matthew 28:1, the Greek word *Sab-bat-on* is used again. As pointed out before, a clearer translation would be: “In the end of the *SABBATHS*, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week...” came the women. With this in mind, understandably then, from early the first day of the week—Sunday at dawn—counting back three days and nights, taking into account two Sabbaths and a day to shop for spices, leaves us plenty of time to fulfill the three days and three complete nights, which is exactly the

sign He claimed would validate His Messiahship.

Reviewing His Resurrection

The gospel of John records, “And he [John] that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he [John] knows that he says true, that you might believe” (John 19:35). John continues to bare record of what went down. “For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled... . And after this Joseph of Arimathea... besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus.... Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with spices.... Now the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher.... There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews’ preparation day [Nisan 14th]; for the sepulcher was near at hand” (John 19:36–42).

On the next day, the First Day of Unleavened Bread—the 15th—the Chief Priests and Pharisees appealed to Pilate to seal the sepulcher since Jesus claimed He would rise after three days and three nights. And so Pilate grants them permission to seal the tomb, assuring nobody could steal the body and claim He rose from the dead. The Romans also set a watch at the sepulcher for additional security (Matthew 27:62–66).

However, as was prophesied by Christ Himself, He rose from the dead and walked out of the tomb as He said He would. Upon the women arriving at the tomb, for they

had bought additional spices to prepare the body, found themselves facing an angel that moved the stone from the doorway, revealing there was no body in the tomb. And though astonished, they believed the angel who told them to go and tell the disciples that Christ had risen (Matthew 28:1–8).

However, upon their departure, Christ appeared to them, confirming He had been raised from the dead. He reassured them, telling them not to be afraid but to go and tell the disciples He will meet them in Galilee where they would see Him again (Matthew 28:9).

After this, Mary Magdalene tells Peter and John the body was gone, so they ran to the garden sepulcher only to confirm He was indeed gone! After this, they returned to their home, but Mary, coming to the tomb after they had left, sees two angels standing where the body was and she is weeping. They asked her why she was crying and, as she turned to answer them, notices someone she thinks is the gardener. However, Jesus allows her to recognize Him and assures her all is good, but she should go and tell everyone He has risen and goes to the Father (John 20:11–18).

Keep in mind, three days before they all witnessed darkness from noon (6th hour) to about three o’clock (9th hour). And finally, when He expired and died there was an earthquake and the temple veil, separating the Holy of Holies in the temple, tore in two revealing the most Holy place in the Temple (Matthew 27:45–51).

But what was enormously astonishing and clearly aroused many people’s attention, was the resurrection of “many” (Greek: *polus*, which means abundant, much, plentiful) people that had died, but now came back from the dead and went into Jerusalem, appearing to many (same Greek word, *polus*). This had to be startling to all the friends and family members who had attended the funerals and/or knew of the passing of those that are now witnessed to be alive again! This had to be surreal, disorienting, and for some, perhaps, disruptively disturbing to their lifestyles, depending on how long these people were dead (Matthew 27:52–53)!

However, this whole event was to prove Jesus Christ was indeed exactly who He claimed to be (Matthew 27:54)—and was also

preparatory for His own resurrection that would happen three days and nights later! Can you imagine the kind of shock this had on so “MANY” (*polus*) people and how it affected and prepared them perhaps, to accept Christ’s own resurrection? Remember, in addition to the apostles, over 500 people saw Him alive—eye witnesses—after He had been beaten beyond recognition (Isaiah 52:13–15) and ultimately executed by crucifixion (1 Corinthians 15:3–9).

It was on that very same day it was discovered He had risen toward the evening that He appears in a room with all the disciples present, except for Thomas, and greets them upon His appearance without using the door to the room. It was an amazing event to witness and extremely encouraging to all of them—in real time!

And then, eight days later, Thomas experienced the same “shock and awe” when he was surprised by the appearance of Christ in the room, again the doors being shut, and allows Thomas to put his hands in His wounds—just a MIND-BLOWING experience for Thomas and the rest of the disciples as they witnessed this, along with many more proofs that are “not written” in the books (John 20:19–31).

The New Testament writings include the eye-witness reports of those that were there and saw what they saw, verifying and validating so many of the Old Testament prophecies that predicted Christ’s coming—and confirming eternal life is mankind’s ultimate destiny. Clearly, this is our inheritance Christ promised us, “if” we will continue obeying Him as He guides our lives. This is the challenge and objective all of us should aspire to, as we live our lives to please God. (Request our free article: *Jesus Christ is Fulfilled Prophecy!*)

Assuredly, Jesus Christ is alive and at the right hand of the Father, patiently waiting on the Father’s command to return and take His rightful place on earth as the confirmed King of kings and Lord of lords, ruling and reigning from the capital city of the world—Jerusalem! This is your appointment with destiny; make sure you’re there! Make your commitment to Jesus Christ, or rededicate your life to the Father through Him!

CHARACTER

Continued from p. 1

have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops" (Luke 12:3).

Many people have great *personality* but little or no character. If personality is the façade and outer beauty of a building, character is the foundation and structural integrity of it. Dwight D. Eisenhower underscored the importance of character when he said: "A people who values its privileges above its principles soon loses both."

We are often taken in by a person's personality when we should be paying attention to their character. God's Word instructs us to focus on the heart, the inner man, the person's character. When God sent Samuel to anoint one of Jesse's sons as king over Israel, Samuel looked at Eliab and said this must be the future king. But God said:

"Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him, for *the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart*" (1 Samuel 16:7).

Just as our society tends to value personality above character, it also tends to elevate talent above character. "Talent without character is like a shooting star. It shines brightly for a while but then it is gone.... In contrast, character is like the sun—it shines consistently and reliably" (Myles Monroe, *The Power of Character in Leadership*, p. 93).

A Great Example of Godly Character

Daniel (his name means: "God is my Judge") stood out from the crowd because of his character. "Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an *excellent*

spirit was in him" (Daniel 6:3). His excellent character was such that his coworkers said this about him: "We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find *it* against him concerning the law of his God" (6:5). Could you or I be convicted for being a true Christian, a person of sterling character? Or are we so much like the world that there would not be enough evidence to convict us of being a person of godly character?

Daniel's character and commitment to God were so firm, it made his fellow governors so jealous that they hatched a plot to bring him down. As a result of this cleverly devised plot, Daniel was convicted. He was found guilty of worshipping his God, as was his custom. Daniel so distinguished himself, as a faithful servant of king Darius that the king could easily recognize that the charge brought against Daniel was a set up. Darius tried his best to exonerate Daniel but could not. King Darius had faith, a faith no doubt inspired by Daniel's faithfulness, that Daniel's God would deliver him.

God delivered Daniel from the den of hungry lions. The impression he made and the influence of his character on Darius led the king to pass a law that all the citizens in his kingdom should serve the God of Daniel (Daniel 6:25–27).

A King Brought Down by His Lack of Character

When God told King Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekites, he spared Agag and the best of the wealth of the Amalekites. Samuel, God's servant, confronted Saul who tried to justify himself and to blame the people. When Samuel pronounced the Lord's judgment on Saul, rather than repenting of his sin, Saul wanted to cover it up so that he could look good in the eyes of the

people. Saul showed his lack of character by seeking public recognition and approval rather than pleasing God. He pleaded with Samuel: "I have sinned; *yet* honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD *your* God" (1 Samuel 15:30). King Saul obviously "loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:43).

Steps to Godly Character

God's Word offers instructions for self-improvement, spiritual growth, and development of godly character. In 2 Peter, for example, we see a plan for building godly character: "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowl-

Jesus Christ was the epitome of godly character. He demonstrated virtue and self-control at all times in every aspect of his life.

edge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, *you* will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is short-sighted.... Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things, you will never stumble" (2 Peter 1:5–10).

Let's take a closer look at two elements from the eight-step plan from the passage above by focusing on two words: *virtue* and *self-control*. *Strong's Concordance* defines *virtue* (from the Greek *arete*) as moral excellence, modesty, purity, excellence in body and mind. The term came from classical Greek to mean that quality of life which made one

stand out as excellent. This was the "excellent spirit" that made Daniel stand out among his peers.

Another essential element of godly character is **self-control**. It literally means "to hold oneself in." It is a term used to describe the self-restraint and self-discipline often required of athletes. Our self-indulgent and affluent culture today gives free reign to unbridled passions in virtually every area: eating and drinking, entertainment, sexual promiscuity, over-spending. The motto of this world seems to be: "If it feels good, do it!"

The development of godly character doesn't happen overnight, nor does it come easy. It is forged like pure gold as one perseveres or patiently endures in the furnace of tribulation. We see this in Romans 5:3–4 where it says: "tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope."

Jesus Christ was the epitome of godly character. He demonstrated virtue and self-control at all times in every aspect of his life. He "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient *to the point of death*, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:7–8).

A person of character will have rule over her spirit, passions, and desires instead of allowing them to rule over her. Like good athletes training for the Olympics, we have to bring our body and mind under subjection to the will of God. The character-driven person will be "temperate in all things" and will subject both body and mind in accordance with the will and word of God (2 Corinthians 9:24–27). The man of character will restrain the use of his power,

influence, and authority if exercising them would conflict with the will of God.

Many tragic downfalls from prominence to disgrace could have been avoided and can be avoided. How? By focusing on our character through exercising rule over our own spirit instead of giving free reign to inordinate and selfish desires (Proverbs 25:28).

Character Matters to Our Eternal Destiny

Our character ultimately determines our destiny. We may suffer for standing up for godly principles and values but ultimately maintaining godly character wins. Greek philosopher Heraclitus wisely observed, "A man's character is his fate." For this reason, therefore, we would do well to avoid compromising on godly principles and values. We will ultimately lose whatever we are willing to compromise our values and principles for (Matthew 16:26).

Character counts because it speaks more to who we *are* than anything else. God is looking at who we *are*, and not so much at how we look or appear outwardly. "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment" (John 7:24). Martin Luther King, Jr. echoed this truth when he said: "I look forward to a day when people will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."

As we commit our lives to God, He will give us that excellent spirit like Daniel so we can live in the midst of the perverse and ungodly culture of this world while not being influenced by it. This excellent spirit that defines godly character will empower and enable us, like light, to disperse the darkness and like salt, to positively influence the world in which we live and prepare us to be kings and priests in the world to come.

SLAVERY

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men and women to be equal. That tells me God will not have slavery in His family when His plan comes to completion.

So yes, God allowed a form of slavery, but that does not mean God wanted slavery. But how would these slave people be treated in Israel as opposed to how Israel was treated in Egypt when they were slaves? God was sure to make Israel

aware of their past life as slaves in Egypt (**Exodus 13:3, 5, 14; Deuteronomy 5:6, 15; 6:12; 8:14; 13:10; 15:15; 16:3, 12; 24:18, 22; Joshua 24:17**). As you read carefully through these scriptures it is clear God is emphasizing His redemption of Israel from slavery in Egypt. He also reminds Israel they should treat aliens and the downtrodden with love because they know what it is like to be downtrodden when they were slaves. You can't equate the

slavery God allowed in ancient Israel with 16th to 19th century slavery in North America.

Let us begin to look at these Old Testament laws on slavery to better understand what is going on. In **Leviticus 25:44–46** it is clear God's law allowed Israel to buy slaves from the heathen who were around them. But note that God did not allow Israel to make slaves of their own people. This is an important distinction to make here.

Remember at this time in history God was working exclusively with this one nation of Israel. In God's theocracy His people could not be slaves.

The critic would argue that this is not right. But the critic has no idea about God's plan and purpose for mankind. God's ways are above our ways. God was trying to make an example nation out of Israel for the nations around them. The fact that God did not allow His own people to become slaves is significant.

We will see later that aliens in Israel had an opportunity to follow the God of Israel and become Israelites. It is possible God allowed this for the slaves that Israel bought. We will speculate about this later.

In **Deuteronomy 15:11–18** we read about Hebrews living as indentured servants (some say slaves) due to economic circumstances in Israel. This was a form of indentured servitude. The poor and destitute had a way of lifting themselves out of poverty by work-

ing for a wealthier person. The other thing about this was after six years they could end this arrangement and the master would provide them with a bonus, in a sense, when the relationship ended. If the “slave” wanted to remain with his master, he could.

Now why would they mention wanting to stay? Obviously because this form of indentured servitude was not so bad. So much so some wanted to remain in the relationship. So, it is obvious from this example the Hebrew “slaves” or indentured servants were not mistreated in this relationship.

The law also (**Exodus 22:3**) provided a means for a criminal to pay off his debt to society by working for the person they had wronged. This makes a lot of sense. Some argue this was slavery, but not truly.

Now let’s look at the type of treatment the heathen slave would be subject to. Were they treated like black slaves in the south? Some think that they were. Again, returning to Armstrong’s book:

“According to the Bible, it’s OK to beat your slaves to death as long as they don’t die right away. After all, it’s your property.” Armstrong then cites **Exodus 21:20–21** as his proof. Here is the scripture: “And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he is his money.”

Reading this scripture by itself without reading the context of the scripture will cause a problem. But let’s start by just analyzing the scripture. The first thing to note is if the servant or slave dies the slave owner is to be punished for this. That should tell you something. The slave owner was still under God’s law in how he could treat his slave.

Secondly, ask yourself a question: Is it possible the slave might have done something worthy of punishment? Obviously under God’s law there was corporal punishment for some actions (**Deuteronomy 25:1–3**). It could be that this law protects slaves from their masters. The law makes the slave owner aware of the fact he needs to be careful when punishing his slave because if he kills the slave he can be punished.

Now what might that punishment be? Well let’s look back at **Exodus 21** and see

what the subject is in this chapter. Beginning in verse 12 of this chapter we are dealing with personal injury law. In **Exodus 21:12** we read that “anyone” who strikes a man and kills him shall be put to death. Verse 14 makes it clear that if this was done intentionally than the man should be put to death. So, it would be logical to assume that the punishment for killing a slave intentionally could be death.

Someone could argue the punishment is not spelled out when you kill a slave, but the whole context of this section of the chapter is addressing personal injury. It would make sense if you looked at the punishment addressed earlier in the chapter. That punishment would be dependent on the intent of the slave master. If they were planning to kill the slave with malice, they die; if it was an accident, there was a different type of punishment. But any slave master would be careful in how he punished a slave knowing he was subject to God’s law.

Further proof of this is found just a few scriptures forward in **Exodus 21:26–27**. Here we read that if you knock out a slave’s eye or tooth then you must release them from slavery! Obviously, God expects heathen slaves to be treated in the right manner. This helps us understand the earlier scripture too. What is ironic is Armstrong does not even address this scripture on a slave being released if the slave owner hurts them in some dramatic way. The reason Armstrong did not address this scripture is because it diminishes his argument about what type of slavery the Israelites were involved in.

One other area to cover to better understand this slavery in Israel pertains to statements made about God’s law and aliens or strangers who were in the land of Israel. Now let us not forget that aliens and strangers (at least some of them) were slaves. Before I go further, I first want to say we cannot be doctrinal about what we are going to discuss right now. The Bible was not written so we could have an answer to every question that may come to our mind. But having said that let’s look at what the law had to say about strangers, aliens, or heathen under Israelite jurisdiction.

Let us begin gathering information in **Numbers 15:29–30**. Here we read about unintentional sin, and we are told that the same law applies to a

native-born Israelite or an alien. Verse 30 reiterates this for intentional sin. So here we have a law about sin in general and we are told that if you sin intentionally or unintentionally you are guilty to some degree, and it would not matter if you were an Israelite or an alien. Now why mention aliens if God is only dealing with the nation of Israel? Well one reason is there were aliens who would be traveling through Israeli land, another is some alien tribes may have lived on land the Israelis had conquered and another possible reason is the Israelites owned slaves who were taken from heathen nations. But these general laws about sin make it clear the stranger or alien was under the same law as the Israelite.

Why is that significant? It gets back at what we were

“In fact, I would argue that those who wanted to become Israelites and follow YHWH and His law would be blessed. God allowed foreign women to become part of Israel through marriage (**Deuteronomy 21:10–14**), why would He not want foreign slaves to become part of Israel if they desired that?”

saying about the law concerning killing or injuring a slave. You could not kill a slave for no reason. You could not beat a slave for no reason. Just like you could not cause a serious injury and get away with it. Your slave could go free. The slaves were subject to the same laws as the Israelites and therefore protected by those very same laws.

Let’s go further now and see what else we can discover. Back in **Exodus 12:43–49** we have some laws pertaining to Passover. The law states that no foreigner can eat of the Passover, but it also says that a slave could eat of it if they had been circumcised. Now this is significant when we look back at the Abrahamic Covenant.

Back in **Genesis 17** we read about God making a covenant with Abraham and his descendants. It was to be an everlasting covenant and one of the

rules was Abraham had to have all the males in his household (freely born and bought) circumcised. Now the fact that it mentions people Abraham would purchase tells me these were likely foreign-born slaves. They became in a sense part of the family of Abraham. Now why does this matter?

Is it possible that slaves in ancient Israel could have converted (been circumcised) and become Israelites like any other Israelite? I think this is entirely possible even though I can’t find an exact scripture to completely confirm it. But I did find evidence in the Wikipedia article, “Jewish Views on Slavery,” that during Rabbinic times non-Jewish slaves were to be offered conversion to Judaism during their first 12-months term as slaves. If accepted, the slaves were to become Jews, hence redeemed immediately. Now where might the Rabbinic authorities come up with an idea like this? Obviously, they studied the Old Testament law and were seeing there what I am seeing. Remember, Moses and his judges had to make decisions on things that the law did not specifically address (**Exodus 18:17–27**; **Numbers 11:16–30**). The idea of conversion could be one of those things.

But let’s not stop there; we have more scriptures from the law that would lead one in this direction. **Leviticus 16:29** tells us that a stranger passing through Israel at this time would need to fast for Atonement too.

Deuteronomy 16:10–14 informs us God wanted the Israelite slaves to keep the Feast of Tabernacles and Feast of Pentecost. Israel was a theocracy at this time and God demanded that everyone follow His Holy Day commands. Finally in **Exodus 20:10** we read that the male and female slaves in Israel also had to cease from work on the Sabbath. If God wanted these heathen slaves to follow these various laws don’t you think God would have wanted the heathen slaves to convert and become Israelites?

Now let’s look at **Numbers 15:15–16**. Now the context of **Numbers 15** is laws concerning special offerings. But an interesting summary statement is made in vv. 15–16. We read here that the community (Israel and all they rule) is to have the same laws for the native born Israelite and for the alien living among them.

The same laws and regulations are to apply to the Israelite and the aliens. Now why would that be? Well, let me let an authoritative commentary confirm in their opinion what I was opining earlier in this piece.

I want to quote from the *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Volume 2, 1990, pp. 826–827 (commenting on **Numbers 15:13–16**): *...The point in these notes about the alien was to insure that the commonwealth of Israel would always be open to proselytes. Indeed, the charter of Israel’s faith embraces “all peoples on earth” (Gen 12:3). Because the ger, the one who sojourns with Israel, was under the same Torah, he also was able to bring pleasure to the Lord. If the ger continues to be a pleaser of God, soon he might become a part of the community as a whole. In Israel the concept of native and alien was not designed to enforce the distinction forever but to provide a process for assimilation. While still an alien, the proselyte must learn to worship in the same manner as the native populace; and together they needed to learn their worship from the Lord....*

Now you may not remember what **Genesis 12:3** has to say. It talks about all people of the world being blessed through Abraham. Now that obviously alludes to Christ, but there were physical and material blessings too. In fact, I would argue that those who wanted to become Israelites and follow YHWH and His law would be blessed. God allowed foreign women to become part of Israel through marriage (**Deuteronomy 21:10–14**), why would He not want foreign slaves to become part of Israel if they desired that?

Just like God demanded respect of His laws among the heathen in the theocracy of ancient Israel, God will demand adherence to His law in the Kingdom among non-believers (**Zechariah 14:18**). God did not force the entire world to keep His law in Old Testament times, but He did require it in the land ruled by Israel. In the Kingdom the entire world will be God’s land and He will force adherence to His law.

My point here is it seems logical God would allow Israel to convert slaves to their religion if the slave agreed in doing that. Once that occurred

Continued next page

SLAVERY*Continued from p. 5*

the law concerning a Hebrew slave (indentured servitude would be in play). Eventually the slave would be released from the contract.

Deuteronomy 4:6 makes it clear Israel was to be an example to the other nations. **Isaiah 42:6; 49:6; and 60:3** also talk about Israel being a light unto the nations. If God wanted Israel to be a light unto the nations, He obviously had no issue with people converting to the religion of Israel during Old Testament times.

A few more scriptures to consider in this opinion that God may have allowed heathen slaves to become Israelites. **Exodus 12:38, 47–49** tells us a mixed multitude came out of Egypt with Israel. **Leviticus 19:33** tells us to love the stranger (alien) as yourself. **Jeremiah 12:16–17** tells us in God's Kingdom all

a heathen person needs to do is believe in God and follow Him and God will welcome them in. **Isaiah 56:3–7** echoes this same sentiment.

When we move into the New Testament, we need to understand that we are no longer under God's rule and administration but Rome's. Critics will cite such scriptures as **Ephesians 6:5–8** and **Colossians 3:22–24** which tell slaves to be good and obey their masters. **Colossians 4:1** also relates that a Christian could own a slave, but they had to treat them well.

This does not mean God endorsed slavery. Ten to twenty percent of the Roman Empire was a slave class. It was part of the culture at the time. Christians were not too concerned with changing the world in which they lived (not that there is anything wrong with that)—they were more concerned with spreading the message about the new order

that would be established by Christ when He returned to take over.

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (ISBE), Volume 4, 1988 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co.), p. 543, states that the New Testament provides no theological support for slavery.

Quoting again from the same encyclopedia quoted in the previous paragraph, p. 544, speaking of slavery during New Testament times: **“For many, self-sale into slavery with anticipation of manumission (release from slavery) was regarded as the most direct means to be integrated into Greek and Roman society. As such, in stark contrast to New World slavery in the 17th–19th cents., Greco-Roman slavery functioned as a process rather than a permanent condition, as a temporary phase of life by means of which an outsider obtained**

“a place within society that had no natural obligations of kinship or guest-friendship towards him” (Wiedemann, p. 2).

In other words, slavery during New Testament times was very different from the North American slave trade of the 16th–19th century. In Greco-Roman culture slavery was in fact a means to a better life once you had served your time.

One final quote from the ISBE, Volume 4, 1988, p. 545: **“Persons in slavery under Roman law in the 1st cent. A.D. could generally count on being set free by age thirty. At the beginning of the century owners were manumitting their slaves with a frequency that provoked Augustus Caesar to introduce laws restricting the numbers and ages of those who could be lawfully manumitted.”**

One final scripture I would like to repeat is **Galatians**

3:26–29. This scripture makes it clear in God's ultimate plan and in His kingdom family there will be no class (slave vs. free), ethnic (Jew nor Greek), or sexual (male nor female) distinctions. God wants His children to be like Him, not oppressed by Him.

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Binding & Loosing

By ARNIE FONTAINE

Authority, Authority, I will decide; I live in a free country. Worship is a personal matter and God will accept my way of worship. All my friends and family worship this way. How can we all be wrong and you right? Throw in a few proof texts and all is well.

Sound familiar? The opportunity to meet people you see but a couple times a year and emotion overrides reason and truth. How did the world of Christendom become so diverse and yet so similar? To understand where we find ourselves, it is necessary to go back in time.

Peel back the layers of history. The Israelites fresh out of captivity demonstrated a lack of patience.

Exodus 32:1–5 says, “And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, then the people gathered themselves to Aaron, and they said to him, ‘Up! Make us gods which shall go before us, for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ And Aaron said to them, ‘Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them to me.’ And all

the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. And he took them from their hand, and fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molten calf. And they said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.’ And when Aaron saw the calf, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, ‘Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD.’”

This practice of self-determination in worship and decision-making has been with mankind since Adam and Eve. The Protestant churches of today trace their roots to the Catholic Church that emerged in the fourth century. The period from the second to the fourth century was a time of change, with the influx of Greek philosophies, gnostic thought, Egyptian/Babylonian polytheism, and persecution for “wrong thinking.”

Irenaeus records this about Polycarp: “But Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna....” Polycarp “always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles, and which the Church has handed down, and which alone are true. To

these things, all the Asiatic Churches testify, as do also those men who have succeeded Polycarp down to the present time” (Irenaeus. *Adversus Haeres*, Book III, Chapter 3, Verse 4).

Polycarp was on the forefront of the battle over observing the annual Pascal feast on the 14th day of the month



Popular depiction of St. Peter & the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven

Nisan (Abib) versus the Roman church's practice of celebrating the feast on the Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox. Polycarp supported the former.

The Catholic Church has for centuries operated on the assumption, or presumption,

that God/Christ invested the Church, most especially Peter and his “successors,” with the gift of infallibility when formally defining matters of faith and morals for the Church. The terminology used is “binding and loosing,” which was part of the Jewish legal system of Christ's day. That system was rooted in the Torah, specifically Exodus 18, where Jethro, Moses' father-in-law and a priest (**Exodus 18:1**) began his instruction to Moses on how to delegate authority. Further on in **Deuteronomy 17:8–13** it lays out the process of adjudication. Verse 11 establishes from where they would get precedent for a judgment, a binding and loosing if you will. Decisions were handed down based on Scripture, which means Scripture could not be overturned but used to pass a judgment.

Verse 8 says, “If a matter is too hard for you in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of strife within your gates, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the LORD your God shall choose.”

Verse 9 then says, “And you shall come to the priests, the Levites, and to the judge that shall be in those days, and ask. And they shall declare to you

the sentence of judgment.”

In verses 10–13 we read, “And you shall do according to the sentence which they declare to you from that place which the LORD shall choose. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they tell you. According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach you and according to the judgment which they shall tell you, you shall do. You shall not turn aside from the sentence which they shall show you, to the right hand or the left. And the man that acts presumptuously and will not hearken to the priest who stands to minister there before the LORD your God, or to the judge, even that man shall die. And you shall put away the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear and fear and do no more presumptuously.”

Verse 13 ends with the word *presumptuously*. This word gives us a clue as to an inherent evil in man's thinking. Its meaning tells us much about the wrong attitude to avoid: to boil, boil up, seethe, act proudly, act presumptuously, act rebelliously, be presumptuous, be arrogant, be rebelliously proud.

Please note what was being discussed and what was not. The people chose when they would come to Moses to judge a matter. Moses was not micro-managing the million

or so people's business. The adding or taking away warning comes into play here too. In **Deuteronomy 4:1–2 and 12:30–32** it is made clear that we are to live by God's ways, not our own devices. This is a warning to avoid syncretism, which is what was happening in those early centuries long forgotten.

It is instructive to note that this binding and loosing was based on the Torah in Christ's time, albeit in a corrupt self-serving way as illustrated by Christ's admonition and condemnation in **Matthew 23**. As we shall see, history has a way of repeating itself.

It is a common practice to look back on history, no matter the category, and judge its content with today's traditions and preconceived notions as to how it should have been or how we think it was irrespective of how it really was. This concept goes to the heart of theology and so many doctrines therein.

With that in mind, there are at least two current applications of binding and loosing among Catholics and Protestant Evangelicals. It is important to consider the hermeneutical principle "Scripture interprets Scripture." This principle requires that the unclear or disputed passage be interpreted based on the clear passage.

Chapter 18 of Matthew is where we shall go, but this chapter illustrates again Jesus' redirection of questions by individuals to make a major point He wants to get across. The Apostles are concerned about positions in the Kingdom and Jesus speaks of humility and forgiveness. There are two places in the New Testament where "bind" and "loose" are used together, **Matthew 16:19** and **18:18**. Here it becomes very tricky. Context and clarity come into play as well as translations. The Greek grammar here is in the future perfect passives in each case. What that in effect means is that the binding and loosing is based on preexisting law.

In Young's Literal Translation, **Matthew 16:19** states, "and I will give to thee the keys of the reign of the heavens, and whatever thou mayest bind upon the earth shall be having been bound in the heavens, and whatever thou mayest loose upon the earth shall be having been loosed in the heavens."

Matthew 18:18 states, "Verily I say to you, Whatever things ye may bind upon the

earth shall be having been bound in the heavens, and whatever things ye may loose on the earth shall be having been loosed in the heavens."

The Faithful Version renders **Matthew 16** thusly: "And I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you may bind on the earth will have already been bound in heaven; and whatever you may loose on the earth will have already been loosed in heaven."

The New American Standard Bible translation agrees with Young's.

The context of Matthew 18 has to do in part with Church discipline, as we see in verse 15 moving forward, and not doctrinal issues. By the time we get to verse 20, Christ is reiterating heavenly support for the judgment passed on the discipline meted out on a brother or sister. In this context, then, we can understand Christ's teaching to Peter in **Matthew 16**. The question is, who can fellowship in the Body of Christ?

The Catholic Church has taken great liberty in applying this to Peter, their presumed first pope (which he wasn't) and all his successors to the present. They can dictate doctrine with the authority of these two groups of Scriptures and the presumed infallibility of decisions. This became dogma finally in the First Vatican Council held 1869–70. This is based on Petrine supremacy. It is ironic that much of Protestantism goes along with doctrines formulated over the centuries by the Catholic Church.

Jesus in **Matthew 18** redirects the apostle's thinking again, as He often did to make the deeper point, so let us see where He was going. In verse 21, Jesus teaches them and us a foundational principle, forgiveness. We have read this many times, haven't we? That is what is at issue here, not handing over the reins of the Church to Peter. Please note that Peter understands the context of what is expected here.

Matthew 18:21–22: "Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Until seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you until seven times, but until seventy times seven.'" And for us? Yes for us as well. Peter understood the shift to attitude, not position.

And the punch line?

Matthew 18:32–35: "Then

his lord called him and said to him, 'You wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt because you implored me. Were you not also obligated to have compassion on your fellow servant, even as I had compassion on you?' And in anger, his lord delivered him up to the tormentors, until he should pay all that he owed to him. Likewise, shall My heavenly Father also do to you if each of you does not forgive his brother's offenses from the heart."

Paul is in perfect harmony with Jesus, as we read this in **Colossians 3:12–13**: "Put on then, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, deep inner affections, kindness, humility, meekness, and longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so also you should forgive."

We should consider the following thoughts; please note the harmony of Old and New Testaments in this regard. Some of the teachings in the New Testament, foreshadowed in the Old before Jesus

The misapplication of binding and loosing along with syncretism and gnostic thought has led to a Christianity the apostles would not recognize as true.

arrived on earth, include the following:

Jesus would be born, live a sinless life, then die for the world (**Psalms 22**; **Isaiah 53**; **John 1:36**).

Jesus would lift up the law of God and make the keeping of it glorious. **Isaiah 42:21** states, "The LORD is well pleased for His righteousness sake; He will magnify the Law and make it glorious." Compare this to Jesus' teachings in **Matthew 5–7**.

Sin would be forgiven upon repentance. **Psalms 32:1–2**: "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile." Compare with **Romans 3:20–24**, etc.

True circumcision would come from the heart, and not the flesh (**Deuteronomy 10:16**; **Romans 2:28–29**).

The Seventh-day Sabbath and God's annual feast days

would still need to be kept, even by Gentiles (**Isaiah 56:1–6**, **Hebrews 4:9**).

Any fellowship, church, or denomination that, in its decisions, endorses sin, is doing so against what the Bible teaches and against God's will. Such sinful decisions are nothing more than man's inventions and will not be backed by God in heaven. Examples of decisions not honored in heaven are below.

- Worshiping pagan gods (**Exodus 20:2–3**; **1 Corinthians 10:20–21**).

- Endorsing the worship of idols (**Exodus 20:4–6**; **1 Corinthians 10:14**).

- Adding to or taking away from the Bible (**Deuteronomy 12:30–32**; **Revelation 22:18–19**).

- The worship of people alive or dead (**Isaiah 8:19–20**).

- Adopting pagan worship practices and holidays like worship on Sunday, Halloween, Christmas, Easter, etc., in place of biblical practices and holy days.

Within these Scriptures is a nugget (**Isaiah 8:20**). The guidelines are clear. The ministry must base their teachings/judgments on the law and the testimony. Testimony is information given to support a point of law, among other things. Way down in **Revelation 12:17** and **19:10** we see it is vital. The book of **Isaiah** is very popular among Christendom as long as you stay in chapter 53, but venture to chapter 66 and eyes glaze over for it is a condemnation of people deciding what and how to worship and the consequences.

The corruption in Christianity began in the first century, with John (in 3 John) lamenting the behavior of Diotrephes, as one of many New Testament examples.

The misapplication of binding and loosing along with syncretism and gnostic thought has led to a Christianity the apostles would not recognize as true. The 300s A.D. have been well documented as a time of syncretism taking hold. It was a time when the Romish church, under Constantine's leadership, adopted the Roman Empire's method of governance as well

Early on in this study, I mentioned that there were at least two misapplications of binding and loosing. I will address the second and add more now.

The misunderstanding and hence misapplication of these

terms is at the heart of the problem in nominal Christianity. The terms in Christ's time and before were legal terms for determining a decision based on God's law.

The next misapplication of the terms is in regard to binding Satan which no human has the power to do. The Scriptures in question are in **Matthew 12** and **Luke 11**, the famous casting out of the demon from a possessed man. In one instance (Matthew) the term bind is used, and in the other (Luke) it is not. What are we to make of this? Well, we can search the Scriptures, and we will not find a single instance of anyone binding Satan until the end-time, as noted in Revelation 20. Casting out does not bind Satan but only removes his influence in that circumstance.

Each individual has a two-step process to protect against the devil, and they are embodied in **James 4:7–12**.

The devil and his demons are ever present through time, so we are instructed to be vigilant. Paul, in **Ephesians 6:10–18**, gives the list of protections for us, the "armor of God." Paul was alluding to **Isaiah 59:17**: "For He put on righteousness like a breastplate and a helmet of salvation upon His head. And He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing and was covered with zeal like a cloak."

Our dependency on God is apparent. All the protection comes from Him.

It might be instructive to read how the angels of God handled satanic beings and their influence. Let us look at some telling scriptures, starting with **2 Peter 2:9–11**.

Please note that even God's angels won't bind or condemn Satan or his demons. And further, in **Jude 8–9**, we see Michael an archangel leaves judgment of Satan to God. Back in **Zechariah 3:2**, the rebuking is from God, not men or angels. For those who would presume such power and authority, take note!

And so we come full circle back to my initial words in part one: authority, authority. The presumption of authority by man regarding worship has led to corruption, profiteering, immorality, and misguided theologies.

Please recall that Satan first introduced gnostic thought, which entices man to decide for himself the parameters of his relationship with God, in the Garden of Eden. The serpent is still at work today.

Male and Female He Created Them

Part 3

By MIKE JAMES

Chapter 7— Cautionary Tales

With medical advances today, many of the transition surgeries usually go well. At least from a medical standpoint. But I'm providing some examples of how even when a transition is successful medically all may not be well.

Here is a little bit of the story of Cari, who was put on testosterone after no more than four visits to a therapist. "I was put on hormones after 3 months of therapy at the age of 17. In fact, because I was only seeing a therapist once per month, it was after 3 or 4 visits that I was prescribed testosterone, with no meaningful attempt made to process the issues that I brought up that led in part to my wish to transition.... When I was transitioning, no one in the medical or psychological field ever tried to dissuade me, to offer other options, to do really anything to stop me besides tell me I should wait till I was 18.... I want to ask you, how many other medical conditions are there where you can walk into the doctor's office, tell them you have a certain condition, which has no objective test, which can be caused by trauma or mental health issues or societal factors, and receive life-altering medications on your say-so?"¹

Max is another example. She transitioned after believing no other options were available to her in coping with her problem. "I felt I had no choice but transition for a long time, and the reason I felt that way was because other choices were not offered to me. I didn't know anyone who had survived feelings like mine without transition and I didn't have any ideas about how someone might do that. That's a problem! How can someone give informed consent to transition when they believe the only alternative is a miserable life eventually cut short by suicide? People who transition believing it's absolutely the only way they can ever experience any relief are people whose community and health-care professionals have failed them."²

Crash did experience some relief by beginning her transition at age 18, but it was not enough to completely help her. By 27 she detransitioned back to being a woman. "Taking testosterone didn't get to the root of my suffering, it only relieved it temporarily. I came out of my transition with many of the same problems I had before and then some. Being supported in my trans identity didn't help me, letting go of it and accepting myself as a woman did. Changing my body didn't help me find lasting peace. I helped myself by tracing back my trans identity and dysphoria to trauma and working through how I'd been hurt."³

Again, there are various reasons why people head down the road of gender dysphoria, but Crash went on to explain the following about her situation. "I realized my dysphoria and trans identity were rooted in trauma and internalized misogyny. I was severely bullied and harassed starting when I was a young girl and continuing throughout my teenage years. I also see a connection between my decision to transition and my mom's suicide. She killed herself. We greatly physically resembled each other, and I think one of my motivations for changing my body is I wanted to differentiate myself from her."⁴

A man who goes by the handle TWT (Third Way Trans) created a website to talk about his transition and detransition.

"When I was a child, I experienced trauma issues with bullying. When I was young, I was physically the slowest boy but also very intellectually advanced like a child prodigy. By fourth grade I was going to the high school to take high school math, and on the other hand I was the weakest. So, I was singled out for being a kind of super nerd.... So, I suffered a lot of bullying and violence. It peaked in middle school where every day I would have some sort of violence directed at me.

"When I was a child, I started to have this fantasy of being a girl, because it meant I could be safe and not suffer from this violence due to being at the bottom of the male hierarchy. I could also be more soft. I used to cry a lot and that was also something that was not seen as good for a boy....

"I was a late bloomer but eventually once I got to be a junior in high school, I

did have some success in dating and had several different girlfriends. After that my gender dysphoria declined.

"When I got to college, in the first few months I didn't meet any women and it felt like a real step back and my gender feelings resurfaced again...."⁵

Things really went south for TWT when he learned of the website "alt.transgendered." He goes on to say, "I couldn't believe there were people in the real world that felt like me! Also I was dealing with the stress of newly being in college and being away from home for the first time. I felt euphoric when I discovered people with similar feelings and begun to believe that it was possible for me to transition."⁶

TWT decided to visit the campus health office and he got referred to the gender clinic. After just two sessions he was prescribed with estrogen. TWT did not talk about his past issues, nor were they investigated by the gender clinic. Initially TWT thought he was on the right track. "I came to believe that I had an essential transgender identity, and it was important to express it. Both the community and the therapist I saw twice before being prescribed hormones confirmed it. I was on a high dose of estrogen, and it created a kind of euphoria and emotional intensity I hadn't experienced before. This was considered to be confirmation that I found my true self.... I got quite a bit of attention from men, many of them the same sort of men that used to bully me as a teenager. This attention validated my then fragile sense of self-worth and validated I was on the right path."⁷

TWT attempted to live as a woman for the next twenty years, but he still was not complete or whole. Eventually he began to see a regular therapist. "I did a lot more therapy and eventually came to understand the roots of this with the bullying and feeling unsafe about being myself and a man in the world.... So, it was

a long process and eventually I worked through. It was a big revelation because I thought my gender identity of being female was fundamental. It seemed like an absolute truth and an absolute axiom, and then it turned out not to be that at all. It turned out to be something that could be changed."⁸

Walt detransitioned in his fifties. Here is some of his story. "My grandmother withheld affirmations of me as a boy, but she lavished delighted praise upon me when I was dressed as a girl. Feelings of euphoria swept over me with her praise, followed later by depression and insecurity about being a boy. Her actions planted the idea in me that I was born in the wrong body. She nourished and encouraged the idea, and over time it took on a life of its own."⁹

Soon after this Walt began being sexually abused by his uncle, and to compound it his parents did not believe it when he told them.

Walt goes on to explain his story. "To a person undergoing gender transition, in the beginning it feels like the right thing to do, even exciting, for the first few months or years. I felt at peace for the first four or five years after I transitioned. Then I realized the high cost of that tenuous peace. Being transgender required destroying the identity of Walt so my female persona, Laura, would feel unshackled from Walt's past, with all of its hurt, shame, and abuse. It's a marvelous distraction for a while, but it isn't a permanent solution when the underlying issues remain unaddressed."¹⁰

Walt began the detransition process after studying psychology at a university. "While studying psychology in a university program, I discovered that trans kids most often are suffering from a variety of disorders, starting with depression—the result of personal loss, broken families, sexual abuse, and unstable homes. Deep depression leads kids to want to be someone other than who they are."¹¹

He went on to say, "Now it was apparent that I had developed a dissociative disorder in childhood to escape the trauma of the repeated cross-dressing by my grandmother and the sexual abuse by my uncle."¹²

Walt Heyer has gone on to start a support network for people transitioning back to their birth sex. "Every single one of them," says Walt, "had unwanted pain caused by sexual abuse, deep trauma, mental disorders, horrible loss, or terrible family circumstances in early life."¹³

One of the people who joined Heyer's support network wrote the following: "I transitioned to female beginning in my late teens and changed my name in my early 20s, over ten years ago. But it wasn't right for me; I feel only discontent now in the female role. I was told that my transgender feelings were permanent, immutable, physically deep-seated in my brain and could never change, and that the only way I would ever find peace was to become female. The problem is, I don't have those feelings anymore. When I began seeing a psychologist a few

THE STRUGGLE IS
REAL, BUT SO IS
GOD.

years ago to help overcome some childhood trauma issues, my depression and anxiety began to wane but so did my transgender feelings. So, two years ago I began contemplating going back to my birth gender, and it feels right to do so. I have no doubts—I want to be male!”¹⁴

The experiences in this section make it clear that many people are not transitioning their sexual orientation just because they feel they are trapped in the wrong body. Upon closer investigation we find many of the people who come full circle and detransition realize they were trying to escape something they could not deal with mentally or psychologically. Escape to the other gender seemed like the obvious choice to make due to parents, schools, doctors, and influencers that did not understand the individual they were dealing with.

Chapter 8— Abnormalities in Sexual Development

Some who advocate for switching genders will bring up examples of people being born with disorders in sexual development. These disorders include indiscernible external genitalia, a mismatch between external and internal reproductive organs, the lack of full development of reproductive organs, and the creation of two sets of sex organs. These disorders happen in about one out of every 5,000 births.¹⁵

The reason these disorders occur is primarily due to genetic, chromosomal, or hormonal defects. Many of these defects can be due to individual choices people make. Some of these choices can include work or environmental hazards. Smoking, insecticides, benzene, and per-fluorinated compounds can heavily increase the risk of aneuploidy.¹⁶ Aneuploidy is the presence of an abnormal number of chromosomes in a cell. Hormonal disorders can be caused by tumors, medications, radiation, toxins, inflammation, and autoimmune disease. But let us not forget bodily inflammation and autoimmune disease can also be impacted by mental and physical stress on the body. Some of these issues are also hereditary and can be passed on to future generations.

We can't put all these issues into a nice little package. Some of these issues may occur without any of the above reasons, but the point I am trying to make is mankind has played a major part in bringing these issues into the mix when we first began living in a way without God.

There is no naturally occurring third sex. As the pediatric endocrinologist Quentin L. Van Meter writes, “The exceedingly rare DSDs (Disorder of Sexual Development) are all medically identifiable deviations from the sexual binary norm. The 2006 consensus statement of the Intersex Society of North America and the 2015 revision of the statement does not endorse DSD as a third sex.”¹⁷

The way these issues are handled today is to try and determine the primary underlying sex of these babies. Medical measures are then followed, including hormones and surgery, to allow the child to develop in the presumed primary sex.

The point here is abnormalities cannot be used to support transgenderism as another alternative to male and female.

Chapter 9— Helping the Children

With any problem we face we need to understand what might help. We always want to pray, fast, meditate, and study God's Word, but sometimes we will need to do more. Dr. Zucker's over 40 years of experience in this area can provide some added help. Zucker's basic protocol for helping children with gender dysphoria includes four areas:

1. Weekly individual play psychotherapy for the child;
2. Weekly parent counseling or psychotherapy;
3. Parent-guided interventions in the naturalistic environment;
4. When needed for other psychiatric problems in the child, psychotropic medication.¹⁸

Point number 1, the play psychotherapy, is to learn why the child thinks they should be the opposite sex. Zucker has found that this kind of behavior is often part of a “fantasy solution” to some other problem. The child thinks being the other sex will somehow make them happier or a more valued person. Therapy is designed to explore the underlying issues, including “cognitive gender confusion, rigid gender schemas, idealization of the opposite sex and devaluation of one's own sex, anxiety in relation to same-sex peers, the connections between separation anxiety and gender, representations of the parents, and triggers that fuel the cross-gender behavior.”¹⁹

Some kids will be able to talk these feelings out in therapy, but others may not. Some can still play out the scenes from their family life that may help as well.

The parent counseling in point 2 is important to find out if there is anything the parents may be doing to cause or continue the child's dysphoria. In one family this therapy helped a father figure out his rage toward his child led to the child's dysphoria. In another example, a woman's hatred toward men because of a rape was projected toward her son. These examples as well as others came from Zucker's experience.

In counseling the parents Zucker also emphasizes the need to set limits on the child's behavior. This is point number 3 above. Some parents fail to question the behavior or engage in discussion about the behavior, believing this is a normal phase that will pass. For others, the reasons are more complex, and it may be necessary to deal with the parents' underlying issues before they will be comfortable in changing their approach to their child's gender dysphoria.²⁰ It's important for the parents to be balanced in their approach with their child. We don't want to bully a child physically or psychologically into a behavior they are not comfortable with.

The final example involves drugs only if there is some other diagnosed issue that is often dealt with by drugs. What's funny about this is how the critics of this protocol will push kids onto drugs to alter their natural male or female biology, but scream and holler at the other side for recommending drugs that would naturally be used for psychological problems the gender dysphoric kid is experiencing. This reminds me of **Isaiah 5:20**, “Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”

Chapter 10— Compassion

I'm writing this final section of the booklet to remind us about the compassion of Jesus. He died for all sinners, and Scripture makes it clear He operated with compassion and concern (**Matthew 12:20; Matthew 11:28–30**). When we encounter people suffering from the subject of this booklet we need to be very careful in how we speak to them about this problem.

I'm writing the rest of this booklet for those who have loved ones suffering from dysphoria and for people who suffer from it. One area of discussion can center on the question, How well do we really know ourselves? We have all made decisions in the past based on knowledge, feelings, emotions, and influences that we know have turned out to be wrong. We have all learned new things and experienced new things that have changed our perceptions from the past. This is one area to explore with young people who are convinced they are another gender than the one they were born as.

Provide these young people with examples from your own life where you have changed your way of thinking about something. Explain that feelings and emotions can change. But most importantly, if they believe in God and the Bible, let them know that God asks us to trust in Him and His Word rather than our own perceptions of reality (**Proverbs 3:5–6**).

The Bible warns us in **Ephesians 4:17–18** to not walk in the futility of our own mind. In other words, without God leading our minds we can go off into areas of thought that are false and futile. This of course relates to the gender dysphoric person, but it can also relate to anyone.

The person who feels morally superior or self-righteous at the sins of others—including those who have followed the transgender path—is feeding a feeling that wars against their own soul no less than the person who would like to be the opposite sex.²¹

We need to remember Christianity is all about transformation. All of us are broken people in need of redemption. For those struggling with gender dysphoria you can become a new creation (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). Even Christians are struggling and overcoming something too. We are just overcoming different things.

To become a new creation in Christ does not mean the world we live in, or the bodies we inhabit, or the minds we think with will be totally freed and completely healed.²² Despite the fact I am married my mind can still move toward lustful thoughts if I don't fight against it. With God's Holy Spirit in me I can overcome and win those battles. I believe in the same way a gender dysphoric person can overcome what seems natural to them (becoming the opposite sex). The Bible neither explicitly nor implicitly promises that the Spirit will change or lessen someone's experience of gender dysphoria.²³ God may do that, or He may make it so the desire to please Him is stronger than the desire to act on one's dysphoria.²⁴

Paul tells us in **Philippians 3:20–21** that we are awaiting our Savior who will transform our “lowly body” to be like His “glorious body.” Only then will all be set in order. Until that time we all will continue to struggle with something. No matter who you are there is struggle in life. Gender dysphoric people may struggle more due to the nature of their thoughts and feelings. But for those who do suffer from this, you can overcome anything in Jesus Christ.

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God’s Plumbline

By **ROBERT GIOVI, SR. and ROBERT GIOVI, JR**

Being from the northeast, I have spent many days in New York City and one of the first things that most people notice are the homogeneous skyscrapers that reach far up into the heavens. It’s quite an impressive feat of humanity when one stops and contemplates the sheer advancement of human development to create such structures. However, when I’m walking around amongst these magnificent buildings, I hardly ever think about them falling over or collapsing. I never question my safety. I know these buildings are built structurally sound. I know they are true and I know their foundations are sturdy. I rest easy knowing that the architects and contractors have measured correctly and these structures won’t crumble. I know this because builders and contractors use a tool called a leveler, or in ancient times, a plumbline, to make sure the structure is straight, sound, and upright. Builders would take the plumbline and, while standing on a wall, they would hang the plumbline and see if the wall lined up straight with the hanging weighted rope. Thus, they would know if the structure was secure, straight, and upright.

In Amos chapter seven, we see God using this same idea and tool to measure the nation and people of Israel. Throughout the course of Israel’s history, time and time again we observe the people and religious leaders of Israel turning their backs to God. Though God has made an everlasting covenant with the descendants of Abraham, we see in Amos that God is warning the people of their crooked and unrighteous ways.

In Amos 7:7–9, God shows Amos a vision, “Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand. And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, “Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more: And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.”

In these verses, Israel is being compared to the wall and the nation that has built themselves up. They are proud of their structure, and now God comes to judge to see how true Israel is and if they are built properly. God gives his judgment in verse 8: “I will not pass by them any more: And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate...and be laid waste.” In other words, God has looked at the people of Israel (the structure) and found it to be unsound, flawed, and crooked. Notice that God is going to destroy their “high places” and “sanctuaries,” and, as mentioned in Amos 5:21–22, “I hate, I despise your feast days, And I do not savor your sacred assemblies. Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, Nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings.”

So we know that the people of Israel were still keeping the holy days, laws, and customs of the times! The people of Israel believed that they were keeping the statutes, but God viewed their works as unrighteous, even to the point where God vows to destroy these structures.

With God’s plumbline, the goal is to measure if we are upright, or a better word for upright would be our

righteousness, according to God’s moral standards. It is important to understand that it is God’s standards and not our own. Anything off-center from the plumbline would be considered unrighteousness, no matter how small the distance is.

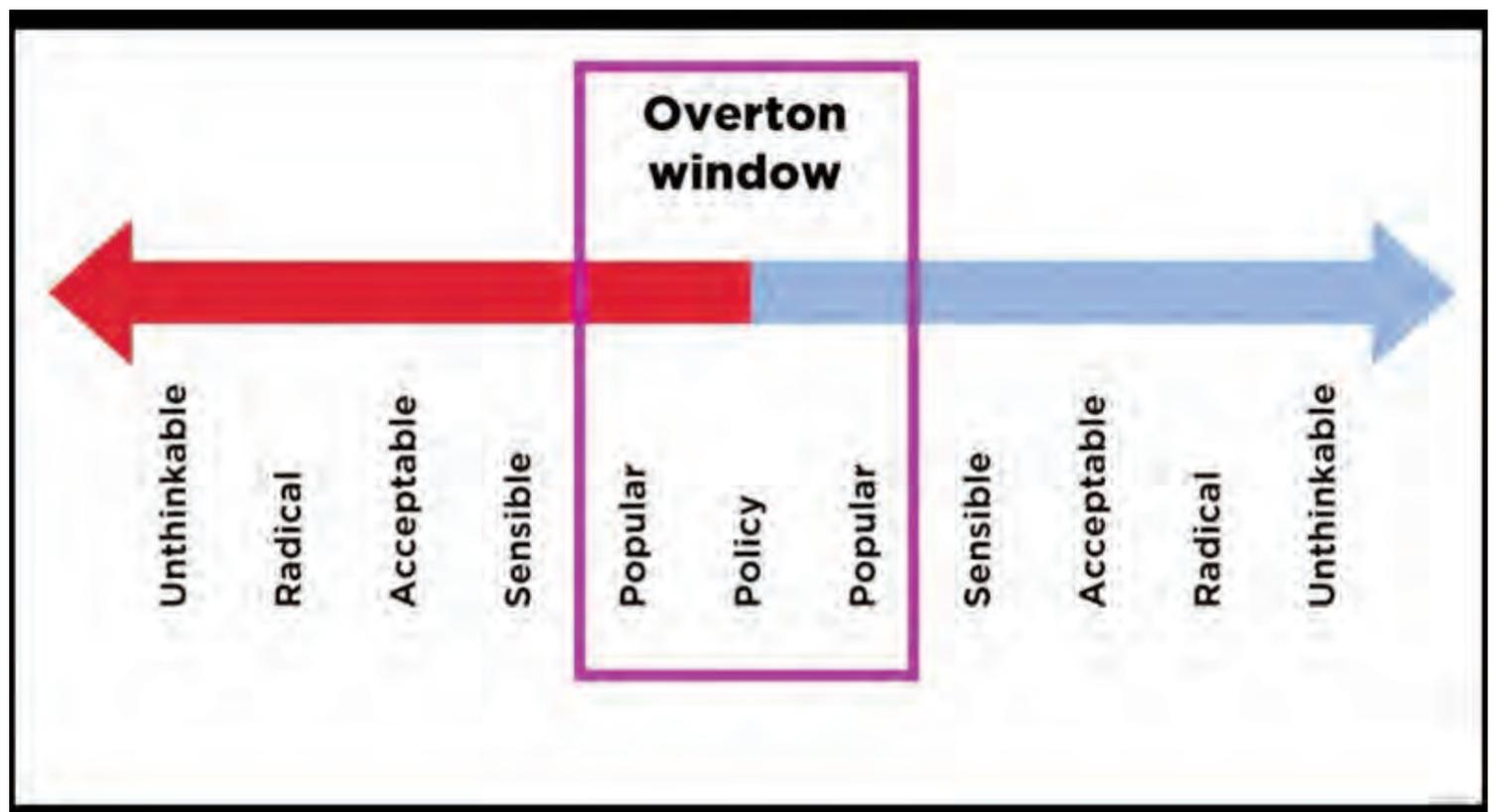
Imagine, if you will, a pendulum, when it is still, the plumbline is perfectly vertical. If you pull it slightly to the left and let go it will swing slightly to the right of center and past the plumbline. Using the analogy of God’s righteousness, either side of the plumbline would be unrighteousness. So why is it then that man, no matter how high he swings that cord, thinks they are in line with God’s law? One of the main reasons is because man believes they know what is right and what is wrong according to their own wisdom. We read this in Romans 10:3, “For they, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” They equate their own wisdom and knowledge to God’s. What does Scripture have to say about that? Let us read it in Proverbs, chapter 14, verse 12: “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” Are we careful to measure ourselves up to God’s plumbline and not our own? Remember, just the slightest pull in either direction is no longer plumb and that is the line that God will judge from. It is very easy to fall when we are off-center.

In the book of Amos, in chapter 7, God gave Amos warnings to tell the people of Israel of their coming disasters. God’s moral standards are absolute. Today’s society does not have any moral standards, whether it be in business, politics, or personal

behavior. God’s plumbline is straight and steadfast. Mankind doesn’t have a straight plumbline, it is swinging wildly from one end of the pendulum to the other while justifying their own works with moral relativism and postmodernism philosophy.

As professed followers of the God of Israel and Jesus, we must be very careful not to fall victim to measuring ourselves with society’s standards. There is a political theory called the *Overton Window*, which is the range of policies and beliefs politically acceptable to the mainstream population at a given time. Imagine, if you will, a horizontal line, and along this line are the perceived political ideologies starting from the middle and expanding outward in both directions. “Policy” is in the middle, meaning these are the current laws and statutes. Then on each side of policy is the “popular,” meaning the public is aware of these ideas and adheres to them as well, even though they aren’t law yet. Then after popular is the “sensible,” which is followed by the “acceptable,” then the “radical,” and ultimately concluded by the “unthinkable.” Now imagine one hundred years ago, two men being married would fall under the “unthinkable” category, but as time and society lose grip on God’s laws and statutes, the window shifts from what the current “policy” is to slowly devolving into the “unthinkable” becoming “policy.” This is the danger of measuring ourselves to the world’s standards and judgments. Without noticing, the window can easily slide left or right and slowly degrade our own moral compass, which is why it is of the utmost importance that we stay upright and secure with God’s plumbline.

We must ask ourselves; how does God measure you? Are you directly on the plumbline? How can we be aligned with God? These questions can be answered by searching the Word of our Lord. In Paul's second letter to Timothy we read this: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness..." (2 Timothy 3:16). God has given us His word to live by, so that we may try to imitate our righteous Messiah. Righteousness is defined as one who has integrity, virtue, purity of life, correct thinking, and acting. We attain these attributes by following God's instructions, laws, and statutes. In Galatians, we are taught about the fruits of the God's Spirit, and the attributes of righteousness. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23). These attributes should be



apparent in our lives if we are in line with God's plumbline.

Let us not make the same mistakes as ancient Israel and measure ourselves by the world's standards, for we know that they can easily shift and

cause structures to collapse. "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on a rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the

winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock" (Matthew 7:24-25). Let us use God's plumbline to build a sturdy, righteous, and upright house, so that we may not fall.

Waiting in Line at the Supermarket

By JEFF FLANICK

Everyone reading this article surely has had the frustrating experience of waiting in line at the grocery store for what seems like an eternity, just to buy a few simple items. A vast majority of people strongly detest standing in lines waiting to check out at a retail store, or to renew their driver's license at the bureau of motor vehicles for example. While I most certainly can state I never have relished the thought of waiting in line with great anticipation, I tend to think I endure the misery of waiting in line somewhat better than the average person. It is not because I am any more special than others, it is simply due to the fact that I am resigned to accepting the reality of always picking the "wrong" line. Additionally, I have noticed that life is not always fair, and manmade systems don't always work as efficiently as expected; therefore, it is not very often I will get my feathers ruffled in situations involving unusually long wait times. Former Harvard Business School operations expert David Maister developed a simple formula to explain satisfaction with the wait experience: $S=P-E$ (satisfaction = perception - expectation). His model concerning "Waiting Psychology" was eventually validated by research. As Maister's formula indicates, how one's experience is contemplated is critically dependent upon a person's expectations.

As Passover is fast approaching, along with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, I will examine the crucial role



expectations have played in pivotal moments surrounding these set-apart (holy) days. In our age of instant gratification and near instant communication, it is hard to fathom the life of a slave in Egypt during the time of Pharaoh. The children of Israel had to wait over four hundred years to be delivered from the bondage of the Egyptians! Moses, as prince of Egypt, had no idea he would be used by God to not only help free the slaves but also to help usher in a new era which manifested God directly working through covenant with the children of Israel. To accomplish this mission, Moses had to lead these people through the wilderness and eventually on to the promised land.

The road to fulfilling the tasks God asked of Moses was not easy. Moses ultimately saw the evil of slavery in his day; and he had to flee to the land of Midian as a result of his killing an Egyptian. Forty years later, God called Moses into service on Mt.

Sinai when Moses went to investigate a mysteriously burning bush. Initially, as Moses was first told of the role he was about to play in convincing Pharaoh to let God's people go, Moses felt he was not ready, nor did he feel worthy of the mission.

"But Moses asked God, 'Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?'" (Exodus 3:11, Berean Study Bible [BSB]). We read in Exodus 4:10-13, "Please, Lord,' Moses replied, 'I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since You have spoken to Your servant, for I am slow of speech and tongue.' And the LORD said to him, 'Who gave man his mouth? Or who makes the mute or the deaf, the sighted or the blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go! I will help you as you speak, and I will teach you what to say.' But Moses replied, 'Please, Lord, send someone else'" (BSB). We don't know with exact certainty all the reasons Moses felt the way he did; however, we do see that Moses did not have the expect-

ation to be an active participant in God's endeavor.

We are all familiar with the plagues of Egypt. A quick internet search concerning the timeframe of the ten plagues duration, reveals an estimated time window being from nearly three weeks on the low end, to approximately forty days on the high end. It is frightening to contemplate living through these events. Imagine the stress levels endured by those experiencing these terrifying plagues: it makes the stress we perceive while waiting in checkout lines pale in comparison. Line psychology suggests that a key factor causing excessive distress is having to wait in line for an unknown duration. Other stressors attendant to waiting involve waits which are perceived to be unfair, unexplained waits, and unoccupied time. The plagues of Egypt, as recorded in Exodus, most assuredly exemplify these undesirable characteristics. Can you imagine how unfair it must have felt to have no clean water as the rivers turned to blood for a week? Without newspapers, TV, radio or internet, the likelihood of everyone having an explanation as to what was happening was nil. As the sun was darkened for three days, what were the people able to do? There was no artificial light, nor electricity. Surely, the people were terrified! In addition to all of this growing fear and trepidation, they had a considerable amount of unoccupied time.

The story of the first Passover night, well over three thousand years ago, is

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a familiar one to us today. But how was Passover experienced the very first time? On the heels of the terrifying events preceding it, Passover was a mysterious unknown event taking place in “real time,” so to speak. The people had no idea as to how it all would end. Moses told God’s people of a new command: to take an unblemished lamb, kill and eat it, after they had placed some of its blood on the door frames of their dwellings. This was necessary to protect their firstborn from the coming Death Angel. What were the **expectations** held by the children of Israel on this terrifying night? Can you fathom the levels of fear and anxiety these people experienced deep within their very being as they anxiously waited for this first Passover evening to end? Put yourself in their shoes on this night. Contemplate being a participant this day (and night) as we read in Exodus 12:11–13: “This is how you are to eat it: You must be fully dressed for travel, with your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. You are to eat in haste; it is the LORD’s Passover. On that night I will pass through the land of Egypt and strike down every firstborn male, both man and beast, and I will execute judgment against all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. The blood on the houses where you are staying will distinguish them; when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No plague will fall on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt” (BSB).

Having complete trust in God (and in God’s servant, Moses) was the only plausible way to endure the coming trial, which was accompanied by the fear of the unknown. Exodus continues the story; in 12:29–30 we read, “Now at midnight the LORD struck down every firstborn male in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on his throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner in the dungeon, as well as all the firstborn among the livestock. During the night Pharaoh got up—he and all his officials and all the Egyptians—and there was loud wailing in Egypt; for there was no house without someone dead” (BSB). A night of terror and panic most certainly!

As a result of this tenth plague, Pharaoh relents and the children of Israel commence the Exodus from Egypt. What was in the minds of these people at this moment? What were their **expectations** as they began an

unknown journey? Jumping forward in Exodus, the children of Israel are trapped between Pharaoh’s pursuing army and the Red Sea. Again, we see extreme fear, stress, and terror being experienced by God’s people. They are waiting in a state of angst, as an unknown fate awaits them. Death, yet once more, seems a likely outcome. God shows His power, His command of events, as well as of the earth, once more. God separates Israel from Egypt with a cloud and a pillar of fire. He parts the Red Sea providing safe passage for His children on dry land. God destroys Israel’s Egyptian enemies for good. Why did God do things in this dramatic manner? “When Israel saw the great power that the LORD had exercised over the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and believed in Him and in His servant Moses” (Exodus 14:31, BSB).

Approximately two months after their salvation at the Red Sea, Israel arrived at Mt. Sinai. Circumstances at Sinai were significantly influenced by the **expectations**, as well as the perceptions, of those involved. Ascertaining the children of Israel’s state of mind with respect to the psychology of waiting is significant to consider. Soon after arrival at Sinai, Moses made his first ascent up the mountain to God to receive instruction. God divulges His desire to make Israel a treasured possession, a kingdom of priests through covenant. Exodus 19:7–8 tells us, “So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. And all the people answered together, ‘We will do everything that the LORD has spoken’” (BSB). At this point, God had demonstrated His power, His love, and His control of events for the benefit of Israel. Israel had clearly seen the works of the Mighty Hand of Yahweh. It would seem reasonable to expect that the people would have been patient in waiting on the Lord, as He had demonstrably proven Himself to be Israel’s benefactor. At this point, no matter what circumstances and challenges were presented, we would have expected that waiting on the Lord would not have caused undue consternation. Of course, we know how the story unfolded all too well.

In another trip up Mt. Sinai, whereby Moses was instructed to come and

receive the tablets of stone God had written the Law upon, Moses was away from the people for over forty days. The undesirable aspects regarding the psychology of waiting impacted the people in a negative way, yet again. The Israelites did not possess the proper **expectations** surrounding God, nor their agreement with Him. Factors negatively influencing the people, which led to rebellion against God, included the following principles: a) uncertain waits feel longer than finite known waits; b) unoccupied time seems longer than occupied time; and c) anxiety makes waits seem to be longer. We find Moses’ perceived delay resulted in the tragedy of Exodus 32:7–8: “Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. How quickly they have turned aside from the way that I commanded them! They have made for themselves a molten calf and have bowed down to it. They have sacrificed to it and said, ‘These, O Israel, are your gods, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt’” (BSB).

Misaligned and misguided expectations led to disobedience. As a result, the children of Israel had to endure an extended forty-year wandering in the wilderness before they were permitted to obtain the promised land. God was so displeased with Israel, He caused most of the entire generation who had left Egypt, to die in the wilderness as they wandered. Numbers 14:35 records, “I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will surely do these things to this entire wicked congregation, which has conspired against Me. They will meet their end in the wilderness, and there they will die” (BSB). It is noteworthy to recall the children of Israel’s impatience with the ability to procure water, food, and manna along their journey. Despite God’s miracles and provisions, Israel at times just found the waiting to be too cumbersome.

Let’s take a look at Passover in the New Testament, specifically Christ’s last Passover, where He instituted the symbols of bread and wine in remembrance of His broken Body and His Blood. How did the Messiah complete His most difficult mission and fulfill all the gruesome, painful experiences

necessary to provide salvation to the entire world? Christ knew what was expected of Him; and He prepared fully to meet those **expectations**. Yahshua Messiah was not taken by surprise with events surrounding Him and His ministry. Recall that after Jesus was immersed in the waters of the Jordan River by John, He fasted forty days and forty nights in preparation for His ministry. During this time, He also endured, and eventually triumphed over, the temptations of Satan. Jesus was fully aware of the **expectations** to be placed upon Him well before His incarnation. We read in 1 Corinthians 2:7, “No, we speak of the mysterious and hidden wisdom of God, which He destined for our glory before time began” (BSB).

The *Bible Knowledge Commentary* says the following regarding this verse: “At the heart of this wisdom is the plan of salvation intended for our glory, determined before time began.” Revelation confirms this viewpoint, as we find in Revelation 13:8: “And all who dwell on the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written from the foundation of the world in the Book of Life belonging to the Lamb who was slain” (BSB). *The essence of the Passover night*, as recorded in Luke, says this: “When the hour had come, Jesus reclined at the table with His apostles. And He said to them, ‘I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before My suffering. For I tell you that I will not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’ After taking the cup, He gave thanks and said, ‘Take this and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.’ And He took the bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body, given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same way, after supper He took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you’” (Luke 22:14–20, BSB, emphasis added).

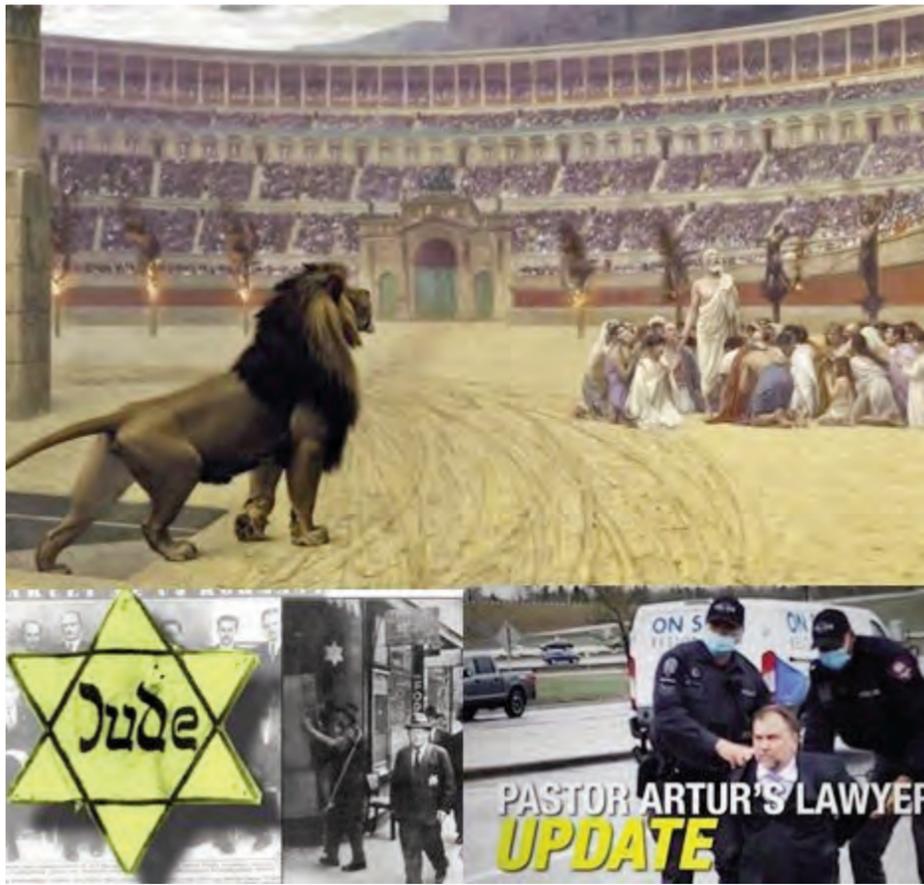
Notice I have italicized the words “eagerly desired” in verse 15 above. Other translations use “with fervent desire,” “with desire I have desired,” or “earnestly.” The implication here is



that Jesus had anticipated this evening for quite a long period of time. He had been **waiting** for its culmination with great **expectation**, even though in the short-term, it was to be a dreadful affliction. Messiah's preparation, **expectations**, and intense focus on His goal, enabled Him to fulfill the required tasks resolutely.

At Christ's arrest, crucifixion, death and resurrection, there were obviously moments of chaos, distress, and disbelief among His apostles. Recall Peter's denial of knowing his Master three times upon the Messiah's arrest. When Mary Magdalene saw Jesus after the resurrection, and reported it to the disciples, they did not believe her. Thomas, doubting Jesus had risen, had to place his hands inside Christ's wounds to believe! How did these men who had such a deep, intimate relationship with Jesus as He walked this earth, lose the "plot," lose their compass? At some level they had an incomplete view of the whole story, which resulted in them having only a partial understanding of their **expectations**. Look at Mark 9:31–32: "He told them, 'The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill Him, and after three days He will rise.' But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him about it" (BSB). This brief snippet of scripture has a very succinct summary of what was to take place; yet when it actually occurred, the apostles' **expectations** did not align fully with the reality of the situation. They had an incomplete view of the entire picture. Fear of the unknown caused them to be extremely frightened and, as a result, they performed poorly at first. Sadly, Matthew chapter 26 tells us that all of the disciples deserted Christ and fled at His arrest.

After the resurrection, Christ taught the apostles for forty days before His ascension. At Pentecost, the apostles (and others) received the Holy Spirit. Now the apostles, as well as the new body of believers, had a firm foundation to build their faith upon. Being edified and further taught the Truth of



Scripture, they now possessed a clear understanding of what was **expected** of them. They were now fully prepared for trials and persecution, able to endure the suffering and **waiting** that was to come. This was all made possible by clearly understanding the **expectations** placed upon them by their Lord and Savior.

In the centuries following the days of the apostles, there have been notable persecutions of the *Narrow Gate's* "Little Flock", those who have ardently strived to hold firmly to the Truth of God's Word. Just like the martyrs and saints who stood for the Truth, even unto death, during the early days of the first century church, these members of the persecuted minority had strong conviction in their beliefs. They understood the **expectations** placed upon them by God, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

As I close, the message for us today is clear. The world is changing rapidly before our eyes. As the apostle Paul stated in his first letter to the Corinthians, "we see through a glass

darkly," not yet knowing everything coming to pass in explicit detail. Obviously, we do see the world in which we inhabit becoming increasingly secular in nature. Traditional Christian teachings and moral positions are continually being ostracized as ancient, "out of touch" philosophies. Over the last few years we have seen a level of "group think" reminiscent of tyrannical episodes experienced in Nazi Germany and Maoist China. Mandates, digital passports and digital currencies have the potential to exercise significant control over our individual liberties. It does not take a big stretch of the imagination to see how a coming social order vilifying fundamental Christianity, especially Ten Commandment adhering, Sabbath-keeping Apostolic Christianity, is established that oppresses, even persecutes, anyone refusing to honor the general public's accepted social "norms."

As Passover approaches, we should deeply reflect on the magnificent gift Christ gave to us via His life and sacrifice. Having a meaningful grasp of

our Savior's love and commitment to us is key to meeting the **expectations** placed upon us as a member of His body. Maintaining a long-view perspective with regard to your ultimate destiny will be essential to enduring any difficulties you may be forced to encounter. As the Feast of Unleavened Bread commences, commit to not only purging out the physical leaven from your diet but, more importantly, removing sin from your life when it is revealed to you. Taking advantage of the opportunities God's Holy Days present to strengthen our walk with Him is of great value!

Future times of darkness, oppression, and maltreatment will be hard to endure while they are taking place. We need to remain grounded in Truth. We need to sharpen our skills of prayer, meditation and study so as to be prepared for what is required of us by our God. Although each one of us is not guaranteed to suffer intense persecution in this life, we should at least be aware of it being a genuine possibility. Having realistic **expectations** concerning possible circumstances we may find ourselves in in the future will be of great value in our effort to remain faithful to our calling.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 10:21–22, "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rise against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of My name, but the one who perseveres to the end will be saved" (BSB). We are told to **expect** such things so we will not be caught by surprise when they occur. As difficult as our journey may be, it is helpful to remember the reward that awaits those who overcome these things! "And to the one who overcomes and continues in My work until the end, I will give authority over the nations" (Revelation 2:26, BSB).

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Truth Is Stranger Than Fiction

By **GEORGE ROPER**

It has been said that truth—where recounted events are actually true and the people involved in those happenings are very real—is stranger than fiction. The validity of such narratives might be construed as false, given that aspects of these accounts may be deemed to be implausible. Conversely, stories of fiction require the hearer to suspend belief, allowing improbable particulars to be entertained as possible. Yet, there are times where it may be hard to discern between the authentic and fan-

tasy, bringing one to confront the fact that the whimsical and fantastical elements of reality can rival those of make-believe.

One consensus of fantasy would be the fables contained in Grimm's fairy tales. Grimm's fairy tales are volumes of anthologies put together by brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm in 1812. The volumes were compilations of Germanic stories based on oral traditions and older written works. The Brothers Grimm blended various sources, along with their own literary contributions, to

arrive at the final rendering of a piece of folklore. These published tales often represented religious themes or were based on real events. Stemming from the passage of time, a number of these stories have lost their association with their contemporary happenings.

The first volume published by the Brothers Grimm was titled *Children's and Household Tales*. A criticism of the book at the time was that the stories were not appropriate for children. Many of the stories had adult themes, sexual innuendo, and were very

bloody in the retribution depicted. One of the featured tales was that of Cinderella. The story that the Grimm Brothers retold is a far cry from the iteration that most are familiar with today. The contemporary conception of Cinderella is based on the Walt Disney version of the telling. Disney's presentation was based on a French version from the late 1600s.

In the Grimm Brother's fairy tale, when the prince seeks out the young woman that would fit the slipper that he retained, Cinderella's stepsisters mutilate their bodies to

fit the shoe. The first sister cuts off her toes in order to slip on the footwear, while the second sister cuts off her heel. Towards the end of the tale, when Cinderella has been matched once again with her shoe and has reconnected with the prince, the birds that befriended her attack the stepsisters. In the course of the assault, the stepsisters have their eyes plucked out and are left blinded.

Although the story of Cinderella has earlier iterations in Europe and Asia, the version that most are familiar

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with in our modern day is clearly recognized as fiction.

Another example in how a story may be recognized as fact or fiction is that of Betty Crocker. Betty Crocker is seen as the author of many food and pastry recipes. She began working with the Washburn-Crosby Company, maker of Gold Medal Flour. The company later became General Mills. Betty Crocker started as a mail correspondent. She personally answered and signed all the letters that came in seeking cooking and baking advice. In 1924, Betty Crocker premiered the first cooking show, which she hosted for radio in the United States titled *The Betty Crocker Cooking School of the Air*. The program was so successful it graduated to a national audience over NBC radio. By the 1930s, Betty Crocker began publishing cookbooks adding the title of author to her resume.

Betty Crocker was immensely popular. At the height of her fame, she was receiving 5,000 letters a day. In 1945, *Fortune* magazine named Betty Crocker as one of the most popular women in the United States, second only to Eleanor Roosevelt. Here's the thing...she wasn't real.

In response to the many letters that the Washburn-Crosby Company received from homemakers seeking instruction, the advertising director, Sam Gale, felt that the clientele would be more receptive to responses from a woman. The marketing department contrived a woman by utilizing the last name of a retired director and coupling it with a friendly sounding name. Hence, Betty Crocker came to be. The signature used on all correspondence was that of one of the secretaries employed with the company. A whole department was created to answer incoming mail. This department included women that were fluent in home-economics. A portrait was created of Betty Crocker by an artist using an amalgam of features from the women of the newly created office. She was portrayed in the fashion of the women of the day. Actresses were later brought on to be Betty Crocker on the radio in various markets. They all read from the same uniform script that was distributed to radio stations.

In the early goings of Betty Crocker's career, many believed her to be an actual person. It is said that great disappointment was felt, resulting in tears, when one came to the understanding that Betty Crocker was not real. Such is the challenge in distinguishing between truth and fiction.

Another example of how truth can be stranger than fiction is the account of Mehran Nasser. We all have experienced delays at the airport but Nasser's experience was definitely unique. 1988 found Nasser as an Iranian refugee who was traveling to London through Paris. Nasser attested that his briefcase holding his passport and documents was stolen in a Paris train station. An exception was made so that he could proceed and board his flight out of Paris to London. However, upon reaching London, he was denied entry due to lack of documentation.

He returned to France on a flight to Paris, arriving at Charles de Gaulle airport, where he was detained by French authorities for entering the country undocumented. Nasser was later released after it was determined that it was legal for Nasser to be on the international airport grounds in international space, but he could not enter France. Stuck in limbo, Nasser waited at the Charles de Gaulle airport in Terminal 1...for 18 years.

Nasser slept on an airport bench and kept his luggage containing his belongings beside him. He washed up at the airport bathroom and ate from the food court within Terminal 1. He benefited from the generosity of airport workers who would share items of necessity and food coupons with him. He also did odd jobs within the terminal.

Nasser lived in this manner from 1988 until 2006. While Nasser legitimately had issues in contending with the bureaucratic red tape of France's immigration laws, establishing refugee status and obtaining documentation. He had grown to be complacent with living in Terminal 1. Over the years, opportunities had been presented to rectify his status. Yet, Nasser would find fault with a given course of action and fail to pursue it.

In 2006, Nasser left the airport for the first time in 18 years after requiring medical attention. He was taken, against his behest, by transport to the hospital where he was admitted. While receiving medical care, the Red Cross assisted him in obtaining housing and documentation.

Following his discharge, Nasser continued to reside in France at a shelter for the next 17 years. He passed away in December of 2022, weeks after returning to live in the terminal of the Charles de Gaulle airport. Nasser's story had attracted much attention over the years. Many journalists sought to interview him during his stay while at

Terminal 1. British author Andrew Donkin worked with Nasser in penning his experiences in a book released in 2004 titled, *The Terminal Man*. A movie loosely based on his entrapment and stay at the French airport was also released in 2004, directed by Steven Spielberg and starring Tom Hanks, titled, *Terminal*. Nasser's story definitely confirms the idiom that truth is indeed stranger than fiction.

Although there are real scenarios that have unfolded in a manner hard to believe, one account has been questioned by many for centuries. The notion that God would have a vested interest in mankind has been purported throughout the narrative of the Bible. From the first page of the Bible until the last, the book details how God established a relationship with mankind, how that relationship was damaged, how it was salvaged, and ultimately how that relationship will be reconstituted. In order to achieve that, the Bible asserts, God became a physical human being with the intent purpose

“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”

of suffering a premature death in order to pay for the transgressions of all mankind. These transgressions amounted to a mandatory debt of death for all who have ever lived. God's sacrificial gesture was an expression of devoted love for those He created. Following this act of love, the Bible recounts, God was resurrected back to life to his former state.

In the book of Genesis, we find a chronicle that pundits have classified as fable. Yet, the writings of the Bible defend itself by assuring that the contents are true (John 17:17, Psalm 119:160). The first book of the Bible details how Adam and Eve elected to have autonomy in fashioning their morality. In so doing, a chronic alienation between mankind and God was introduced that would affect every individual that lived. God later outlines how this condition has affected humanity.

“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2, NIV).

This condition would have a profound terminal prognosis (Romans 6:23). Paul explains how these circumstances have affected all of humanity.

“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one

man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12, NIV).

As a result of Adam and Eve's decision, mankind found itself plagued with the prospect of irreversible death. At the onset of these circumstances, God described how he would rectify these conditions.

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel” (Genesis 3:15, NKJV).

God, in addressing the devil, here acknowledges that Eve would be left with a poor impression of Satan following his tactics and her failure to adhere to God's direction. God points out that, going forward, those that would share her disdain for Satan's methodology and those that were supportive of it would clash. God continues by declaring that a future descendant will confront the status quo that Satan would propagate. In so doing, this descendant's behavior would terminate Satan's dominance, while the descendant would not go unscathed in the exchange. The descendant being referenced here is Jesus Christ. This passage is recognized as being a prophecy of the coming Messiah.

The apostle John indicates how Christ commenced this role.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:1-3, NKJV).

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14, NKJV).

“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him” (John 1:10-11, NKJV).

John details how God became a man as originally forecasted in Genesis. John later attests that Christ's purpose in His arrival was to remedy the separation from God that sin had created.

“Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin” (1 John 3:5, NIV).

The apostle Peter, in agreement with John voiced that Christ sought to pay the penalty of death that all mankind has incurred with his own life,

so that we might be reconnected with God.

“For the Messiah himself died for sins, once and for all, a righteous person on behalf of unrighteous people, so that he might bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh but brought to life by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18, Complete Jewish Bible).

Peter clarifies that Christ's death served to satisfy the penalty of death for all humankind. He further illustrates that the purpose of Christ's sacrifice was to allow for humanity to be reconnected to God. He further highlights that although Christ died a physical death, he was resurrected by the power of God the Father. The apostle Paul also conveys the same intent for Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3-5, NIV).

Paul continues to review how death entered the world when mankind chose to deviate from God's guidance, as was earlier illustrated in Genesis. Followed by emphasizing what Christ's sacrifice actually achieved.

“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:20-22, NIV).

Christ's sacrifice repaired the damage that occurred in the relationship between God and man. It made God accessible. In so doing, the prospect for mankind to have a relationship with God and ongoing life was made possible.

The story that the Creator of the world would become one of His creations, suffer, die on their behalf, and be resurrected to what He once was, may seem farfetched. Many may dismiss it as allegory or a fairy tale. Yet all those that speak to us through the Bible insist that these accounts are very real, and that God's devotion to mankind is equally as certain. John describes God's motivation which has compelled how this story has evolved.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16, NIV).

Granted, this telling may appear to be quite preposterous but then again...truth is stranger than fiction.

In Loving Memory

Bronson T. James

June 12, 1946 – January 5, 2023

On Thursday, January 5, 2023, our long-time friend and brother in Christ, Bronson T. James, fell asleep in the Lord.

Bronson, 76, was a long-time servant of God's people. He was one of the pioneers of the Church of God International ministry. He pastored churches, served for decades on the CGI's Ministerial Council and Board of Directors, and was instrumental in the creation and production of the *Armor of God* television program. He was hired by the CGI in 1988 to manage the Letter Answering Department, and he continued working at the home office, taking on various other responsibilities, until he moved to Detroit, MI, in circa 2002.



Bronson was known especially for his exceptional singing voice and musical skills. He frequently contributed to the worshipful atmosphere of festivals and Sabbath services through providing special music. He also participated in musical productions in Tyler, Detroit, and other areas.

A gifted orator, Bronson not only hosted the *Armor of God* program for many years but also hosted his own television and radio talk shows at various times. He was well-known within Tyler's media industry.

We join Bronson's wife Myra, son Aaron, and daughters Sharon, Paula, and Destiny in mourning the loss of a dear friend and loved one. We look forward to seeing him again in that day when the trumpet sounds and all who are in Christ, whether living or asleep, rise to meet the Lord to join Him in His everlasting Kingdom.

Rest in peace, dear brother, "till we meet again!"

Clint Mahoney

February 27, 1941 – January 21, 2023



Clinton Gilbert Mahoney II, 81, of Birmingham, Alabama, formerly of Long Island, New York, and Paducah, Kentucky, fell asleep in the Lord on January 21, 2023. Services for Clint were on February 4, 2023, at Loftus-McManus Brookport Funeral Home, in Brookport, IL.

Clint was born on February 27, 1941, in Freeport, New York, to Clinton Gilbert Mahoney I and Charlotte Josephine (Story) Mahoney.

He was preceded in death by his parents and his sisters, Marilyn Lucey and Ellen Rose. He is survived by his wife of 40 years, Nancy Lawrence

Mahoney; his four children, Kathy (Bob) Scruggs of Brentwood, Tennessee, John Mahoney of Paducah, Tara (Ron) Padgett of Brentwood, Tennessee, and Clinton G. Mahoney III of Rushville, Indiana, as well as 13 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren; by nieces Terry and Kelly and nephew Sean; his brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Thomas and Vickie Collins of West Paducah, Kentucky; their daughters, Amanda and Cassandra; four grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Clint graduated from Freeport High School in 1958, served as an Air Force medic stationed in Germany from 1959–63, where his talent of caring for people was discovered and he was encouraged to be an AF doctor, and where he taught himself guitar. After honorable discharge, he worked for NY Telephone, South Central Bell (Bell South) in Paducah and Birmingham for 30 years, starting as a lineman, promoted to foreman in record time, and retiring as manager in 1994.

Clint, like his father, also worked as a NYC taxi driver to bring in extra money at night. He volunteered in many organizations, helping the homeless and tutoring at-risk teens for high school graduation and life success. Whatever Clint did, he was always

stylish, with his aviator shades, handlebar mustache, (mutton chops in the '70s) and just as comfortable in old jeans and sneakers as in one of his many snappy suits or blazers.

Clint was ordained as a minister of the Church of God International by Ronald L. Dart in 1995 and served as minister in churches in Birmingham, Montgomery, and Atlanta for over 20 years. He was an ordained elder for 28 years, serving in any way needed.

Clint will be remembered as loving God, family, country, quiet time praying and studying his Bible, fellowship with his church and family, his appetite for coffee and bananas, love of nature and camping, daily jogs, science and history (especially the Civil War), and playing guitar and harmonica while singing bluegrass and gospel with good tenor, but especially rich bass and baritone. His children and grandchildren will always remember his hearty laugh, zany humor, and quiet wisdom. His wife will remember decades of faithful dedication and love to each other and to others.

Clint passed away peacefully in the hospital surrounded by his children, with his wife holding his hand.

C. Wayne Cole

January 1930 – September 2022



Cyril Wayne Cole, 92, died peacefully on September 4, 2022.

Wayne was born to Otis and Nellie May Cole in January, 1930, in a country home near Fairview, Oklahoma. He was the fourth of nine children. In 1934 a tornado devastated the family farm, and two years later they made the decision to leave "dust bowl" Oklahoma and move to Oregon where they settled in



the Willamette Valley town of Jefferson. Through his teen years Wayne worked in the timber industry during his summers and for two years after high school, and in 1950 moved to California to attend college. In 1953 he married Doris Allen and the two spent the following decades living across the United States and overseas, including 11 years in Australia.

In 1955 Wayne and Doris welcomed their first child, Randall, born in Corpus Christi, Texas. Three years later Patricia was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and in 1965 Richard was born in

Sydney, Australia.

Wayne and Doris lived in Tyler, Texas from 1979 until 2016, working together for much of that time, until moving to Portland, Oregon, to be closer to Patricia, who has provided immeasurable service to them over recent years.

In 2018 Wayne needed to begin dialysis treatments—under the care of a doctor who became like family. After four good years Wayne and his doctor decided to discontinue treatment just a week after he celebrated the 69th anniversary of his marriage to Doris.

Wayne is survived by Doris, their three children, seven grandchildren, and two great grandchildren, along with three remaining siblings and a host of extended family and friends.

Wayne served in the ministry for many years and was loved and cherished by many people.

¹³ Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. ¹⁴ For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. ¹⁵ According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18, NIV).



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