



THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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“Put on the whole armor of God”

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In This Issue

Is America Losing Its Heritage? (If So, What Can We Do?)

Are American and modern western leaders following the disastrous path of the leaders of ancient Israel? If so, what can be done about it? **Page 1**

My Sweet Lord ... Which One?

George Harrison’s hit song “My Sweet Lord” was wildly popular in the early 1970s, especially with Christians, who identified the “Sweet Lord” of the song with the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. But was Harrison’s “Lord” really the Lord and Messiah of Scripture? **Page 1**

The Book of Enoch

Many today have given much attention to the Book of Enoch, with some believing it offers important details about the “sons of God,” “daughters of men,” and “giants” of the Genesis 6 account of events that led to the Great Flood. But are the works attributed to “Enoch” trustworthy? Or do they contain the kinds of “Jewish fables” the apostle Paul warned about? **Page 1**

Covenants

When we think of covenants in the Bible, many of us think of only two, the Old Covenant and the New. But there are other covenants in Scripture, and each involved decisions that would propel God’s plan forward. Each covenant proved to be a defining moment in the lives of those involved. **Page 9**

The Great Controversy versus the Bible

The book *The Great Controversy* is highly regarded by Seventh-day Adventists and is said to have changed the lives of many who have read it. Yet, though the book has biblically sound teachings within it, it also has teachings that are clearly unscriptural. **Page 10**

“He hurt her!”

Scripture declares, “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them” (Psalm 119:165). Offenses are common today; people are offended by all sorts of things. But what does the Bible say about offenses? What are the consequences of offense? And how do we best deal with it? **Page 12**

And Much More...



Is America Losing Its Heritage?

(If So, What Can We Do?)

Interestingly, the history of the United States illustrates an obvious Christian influence that is remarkable beyond question. And yet, presently, there appears to be a “cultural shift” to cancel this connection. One cannot help but to ask, why? What is so wrong about admitting the United States of America has a connection to the God of Israel?

By **BILL WATSON**

Back in the early 19th century, the United States was already showing signs of abandoning the tenets that were foundational to the “government experiment” Benjamin Franklin described when a woman asked him, as he was leaving the Constitutional Convention, “What have we got, a republic or a monarchy?” “It’s

a republic, if you can keep it,” Franklin replied. And in the context of this challenging remark, sure enough—we didn’t keep it! Instead, we devolved into a democracy, which has grown into a strong federal (a.k.a. centralized) government that influences the legislation of the “sovereign” states, regardless of their differences, and sometimes coerces or extorts them to adopt legislation from the federal level by withholding federal grants and subsidies to the states for leveraging their federal influence.

This conflation of government where *state’s rights* can be superseded by federal laws has now created all kinds of confusion. Consider the conflict and tension within the United States because the Federal Government believes a law should be nationalized, regard-

See **HERITAGE**, page 2

My Sweet Lord ... Which One?

By **JEFF FLANICK**

George Harrison’s *My Sweet Lord* became a worldwide number-one smash hit after its release in the fall of 1970. The song was the *bestselling* record of 1971, and it still is heard around the world in regular radio station playlist rotation. There are many reasons for the single’s enormous popularity. The song was performed by expert musicians, it has a musically “catchy” tune, and of course it was sung by a member of the most famous band in the world, the Beatles. *My Sweet Lord* was the first number-one single made by a member of the Beatles after the band broke up.

All these things notwithstanding, it may be the lyrical content that has contributed most to the song’s long-lasting universal appeal. Many people simply identify with the concept of lov-

ing “their” sweet Lord. The website *World Population Review* states the following: “About 85 percent of the world’s people identify with a religion. The most popular religion is Christianity, followed by an estimated 2.38 billion people worldwide.” The website also states, “Although religions are often very different from one another in theology and practice, it is arguable that most of them focus upon two near-universal themes: How to behave here on Earth, and what to expect when we die. Most religions teach faith in a higher power, be it one’s own spirituality, nature, the God/YHWH/Allah of Christians, Jews, and Muslims, or the Hindu deities Vishnu, Shiva, Ganesha, Shakti, and Surya.”

Many Christians, especially those from the *Baby Boomer* generation, as well as those

See **WHICH LORD?** page 5

The Book of Enoch

By **MIKE JAMES**

Despite the fact the Book of Enoch is not part of the Bible, I think we need to discuss it due to information I have received regarding the interest some in the Church are dedicating to this spurious book and others like it. I want to make it very clear why this book is not Scripture and should not be used as a source of biblical truth.

To begin, there are three books of Enoch (1, 2 and 3). The focus of this article will primarily investigate what is known as 1 Enoch (the Ethiopic Book of Enoch). Second Enoch is also known as Slavonic Enoch. Third Enoch is also known as the Hebrew Book of Enoch. All these books are spurious. The older section of 1 Enoch (mainly the book of the Watchers, chapters 1–36) dates to around 300–200 BC. The latter part of the book (Book of Parables, chapters 37–71) is dated around 100 BC. Other sections of 1 Enoch include the Book of Luminaries (chapters 72–82), the Dream Visions (chapters 83–90), the Epistle of Enoch (chapters 91–105), and two appendices (the Birth of Noah, chapters 106–107, and a Final Book of Enoch, chapter 108). Many believe this book was written originally in Aramaic (possibly Hebrew, too), then translated into Greek, and finally into Ge’ez (ancient Ethiopic). The oldest full manuscript of the book is in Ge’ez from the 15th–16th century AD. Several of the oldest fragments were found in the Dead Sea Scrolls in Aramaic.

Based on evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Book of Enoch was widely read during the Second Temple period (586 BC – AD 70). Today, the Ethiopic Beta Israel community of Haymanot Jews is the only Jewish group that accepts the Book of Enoch as canonical and still preserves it in its liturgical language of Ge’ez.

The main reason for Jewish rejection of the book is that it is inconsistent with the teachings of the Torah. Rabbinic Judaism considers the book to be heretical.

See **ENOCH**, page 7

HERITAGE

continued from page 1

less of the disagreement the people of a given state may have. *IT APPEARS WE HAVE LOST OUR WAY!*

Consider the tensions and conflicts currently experienced over the encroachment of the Federal Government against state laws regarding immigration, abortion, legalized cannabis, public education curriculums, sanctuary cities or states, LGBTQ+ laws, and equality [DEI] regulations often mandated in the work place or public educational facilities. These are just a few categories that cause contentions among ourselves and creates enormous cultural tensions, quarrels, and hostilities, which unfortunately lead to division and injustices inflicted upon the people.

It Appears We Have Lost Our Way

Much like ancient Israel, the affluence and wealth, leisure, and luxuriating lifestyles of the west contributes to this lack of interest and abandonment toward the God of Israel who has cared for and protected this very blessed country we call the *United States of America*. We are an extremely well endowed and blissful nation compared to others around the world. This is primarily why so many “foreign nationals” try to breach the borders of the USA and Canada; they see what our society has and they want it as well.

But, much of what has gone wrong is due to weak leadership in so many areas. There was a time when our leaders could be described as Romans 13:1–8 portrays, but clearly, those days appear to be declining. We are told, “for rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.... For he is the minister of God to you for good...a revenger to execute wrath upon him that does evil” (Romans 13:3–4). This is a key ingredient in maintaining the “rule of law.” However, if the leaders are motivated by greed, power, and selfish gain, corruption will result and the *balance of justice becomes* misappropriated to “favor the evil agenda” of those involved—and sadly, that is exactly what many leaders in *key roles* of our institutions are doing!

When reviewing that scriptural description of leadership and comparing it to the legalization of murdering babies and selling their body parts, legalizing homosexual marriages, allowing children to receive gender reassignment or hormone blockers *without the parents approval*, or allowing immigrants into the country illegally, then support them at the expense of tax-paying citizens while many break the laws of the land...well, it’s just simply ludicrous!

Furthermore, *our leaders legislate to approve* laws allowing Satanic churches to be sanctioned as 501c3 non-profit charitable organizations and promote certain LGBTQ+ freedoms that are confusing our youngsters about their sexual orientation and/or gender, which leads to boys competing against girls



“Gay Pride” parade

in sports, or legally enter their locker rooms and bathrooms, as the *Federal Government* is trying to legislate under Title 9. These are just some things the current administration advances and endorses.

It’s becoming more surreal every day! It’s just so hard to believe our “leaders” have lost their sense of right and wrong, just and unjust, or what’s normal and abnormal. Isaiah mentioned, “*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! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight*” (Isaiah 5:20–21)!

Also, Paul has some sharp critiques about his time during the first century because he too was confronted with similar *challenges of evil* we are facing today. Notice: “...so they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man...birds...four-footed beasts and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: ...For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the women, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.... God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness” (Romans 2:20–32).

Unfortunately, some of the most noble and honorable objectives our forefathers had when this nation was originally settled have been forgotten. Freedom and liberty has been redefined to mean “anything goes!” Janice Joplin once said, “Freedom is just another word for when you have nothing left to lose.” It would seem we’re on that trajectory. The idea of retaining any innocence, integrity, or honor about morality, leadership, education, science, and entertainment is no longer valuable. In our “woke” society today, it’s all about devolving, shocking, canceling, redefining, and embracing a reality void of decent, respectful, and considerate judgment. And the victims—those that suffer from these mis-

judgments and injustices—are people like you and me that remain loyal to Christian tenets.

The Effects of Unbridled Secular Government

The United States’ civil government is modeled “somewhat like” the biblical example of *ancient Israel’s tribal confederation* during the period of the Judges. It was a decentralized nation with multiple civil leaders, much like the USA’s government, which has city, county, state, and national leaders. The United States’ civil government was designed to be decentralized with limited federal, or national *interference upon the states*—as the Constitution defines it.

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To further assure the structure of “decentralized government,” each state in the union composed its own state constitution. This permitted residents of that state to vote for, *based on POLICIES*, people they believed would support and promote legislation that had their best interests at heart, *within their state*.

Unfortunately, when we look back over the past few years, along with the *potential of similar challenges occurring again in the future*, we recognize *federal government* interference—in particular, circumstances surrounding the pandemic with *non-elected government agents* making *societal and cultural decisions* that included mandates, but without legislative support. It became noticeably plain and was very divisive and clearly *autocratic and dictatorial* for the time—*infringing on our civil rights!*

“Policies” were introduced without any logical or scientific support, or legislation to justify the actions many local governments and businesses enforced—even to the extent of threatening the termination of those businesses or people’s careers that didn’t comply. It was extremely revealing as to the approach certain local and federal agencies took toward compromising and directly encroaching on the civil rights and liberties of the citizens of nations around the world. And this included the USA and Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and areas of Europe, the Netherlands, Italy and so many others in the Pacific Rim, Eurasia, Russia, India, and South America.

People were “shocked and awed” when confronted with restrictions that prevented access to their jobs, restaurants, grocery stores, and entertainment venues, unless particular stipulations were met and/or agreed to that were designed to regulate your behavior. This was done all *under the guise*

that it was supposed to “*protect and prevent*,” which when considering the measures taken, did neither! However, there was one specific outcome glaringly obvious! **Do you know what it was?**

It appeared *we were being surveilled for data collection, behavioral observation, and control*—it was the perfect storm! And there were many people seriously troubled and uncomfortable about how things were handled by increased regulations, which were forced upon everyone by the “powers that be,” especially from the federal level! And Christians were conflicted by these federal mandates that were demanded and imposed on them against their conscious, which in some cases, made no sense. Many people did not like the constraints, or restrictions being exerted by a variety of government agencies and healthcare operatives. Yet there were people claiming the *only “choice” a Christian* had was to submit to these mandates and required regulations, due to what the apostle Paul said in Romans 13—but, *is this true?*

How Should a Christian Understand Romans 13?

As mentioned already, our forefathers had some very noble and idealistic aspirations for this “New World.” Their objectives and goals were conversely 180 degrees in contrast to that of Britain’s royalty and the monarchies of Europe. Their understanding of rulers was, they were not a terror to good works, but to evil instead. They believed rulers were actually ministers of God to the people for good—that they were the revengers to execute wrath upon him that does evil. They believed these types of rulers were *ordained of God*, and anyone resisting these men of character, honor, integrity, fairness, and justice should receive damnation unto themselves. However,



this was not the shared perception of our political forefathers concerning the elites of England and Europe—they considered them *scoundrels!*

These prerequisites of leadership as mentioned above and by Paul, outlined in Romans 13, demanded respect, obedience, and submission! But, *what if* the government “drifts” from these principles and begins to initiate demands or legislation that is self-serving for nefarious reasons—like control, surveillance, and data collection; or perhaps, even attempts to encroach into your healthcare and food choices, or the possibility of limiting where you should live, go, or what you should drive, buy, or watch?

What if certain government mandates conflict with your conscious because they require submission to specific demands that transgress certain *personal boundaries* you believe are not in your best interest? What is the expectation God has on the Christian when surrounded by circumstances that could be harmful to you, your family, and your friends? And how does that “measure-up” with what

Paul mentions in Romans 13:1–8? Let’s remember: “Love works no ill to his neighbor” (Romans 13:10). And that *includes the government of the land!*

However, *what if* the government begins to work ill toward the people it serves? *What if* the laws clearly infringe on your freedoms, such as healthcare choices, freedom of speech, or the right to defend yourself? These are important questions that go to the heart and foundation of our Christian resolve—of what is right, fair, and just! These are the very fundamentals of our Constitutional rights as U.S. and Canadian citizens—and *as Christians!* So when is it acceptable to take a stand, or pick a lane?

When Moses was born, Egypt’s Pharaoh spoke to the Hebrew midwives and told them to kill all the Hebrew male newborns (Exodus 1:16), because they feared Israel was gaining strength and would become stronger than them. But the *midwives refused* to listen—they *resisted* this mandate from Pharaoh—and in so doing, were blessed by God (Exodus 1:17–22).

How about Paul’s appeal as a Roman citizen (Acts 22:22–29), which afforded him to expand his platform to preach the gospel to the Roman emperor’s household (Philippians 1:13; 4:22). Paul stood his ground, appealed to his rights as a Roman citizen, *resisting* the charges by his peers. He did not hesitate to exercise his rights while in his bonds. Peter was of the same frame of mind when *he refused* to stand down from preaching, though *he was resisting* the religious authorities commands (Acts 4:1–21; 5:17–42).

These stories illustrate a conflict between the apostles and the managing religious authorities and cut across what Paul says: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.... the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resists the power, resists the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation” (Romans 13:1–2). And Christ advised to do as the Pharisees said, but don’t do as they do (Matthew 23:1–3). So are we to just *mindlessly follow* the govern-



Continued next page

Continued from page 3

ment's demands if it violates our conscious (Romans 14:23)? Keep in mind, additionally, Daniel opposed the king's edict, and the Baptist called Herod out for his sexual sins, and even Jesus called him a "fox."

In the mid-1800s, prior to the Civil War, the USA found itself divided over slavery. This caused legislation to be passed by the government that if anyone caught helping to smuggle slaves to freedom, they were subject to prosecution and could be fined and/or jailed. And yet, because of the *immorality of slavery*, many *Christian congregations* participated in what was later called the "Underground Railroad." It was a network of people, including Christians, dedicated to helping to free slaves, which was "illegal" at the time, exposing themselves to arrest and prosecution by the government! Yet, *they resisted* the law, jeopardized their lives and property to do what they believed was morally right in the eyes of God.

During the development of the USA's representative government, the Christian congregations of the colonies were very active in authoring their "Bill of Rights" for each colony. The clergy (*The Black Robe Regiment*) was heavily involved in defining the way of what later manifested as the USA's national Constitution and Bill of Rights. These were men of enormous courage and boldness. They were not fearful of "standing in the gap" for what is right, even becoming heavily involved in resisting the government of Britain as it began to accelerate toward excessive taxing, control, and ultimately the Revolutionary War! (<https://nationalblackroberegiment.com/history-of-the-black-robe-regiment/>)

These are all illustrations of *rightful Christian activism* that occurred at particular times and in the context of specific controversies of the day and age they occurred. And so, what are the *contentions* of our day and age? Is it acceptable for a Christian to stand up, defend what is right, and oppose issues like legalized abortion, gender dysphoria "solutions" that do not involve parental consent, and homosexual literature displayed and dispersed in our elementary schools? Or how about transvestite camps that allow elementary aged boys and girls to dress and act in opposition to their biologically assigned gender?

Are there things worth taking a stand for as Christians today? It's been said, "If we don't stand for something, we are likely to fall for anything." Is that true about us? Do we contribute, by our faith and lifestyles, to making a difference with those we intermingle with? Are we able to be *brave, bold, and courageous* enough to stand up for what is right and *resist* those circumstances and conditions, regardless of who is causing the conflict, and willing to accept the consequences we may incur? What's our position?

A Time is Coming: You Will Have to Choose

In Revelation 13:16–18, we read about a "mark" that will be required, or mandated, by the state government. The Bible calls this government "the Beast"—Mystery Babylon The Great! This "mark" will be *decreed* upon everyone. Refusing to receive it will prevent you from buying or selling. You will be unable to integrate into the social system and be a part of the cultural society. Additionally, Daniel warns us this government will "think to change times and laws" (Daniel 7:25).

This is so serious—that is, the decision about whether or not to receive this "mark"—that God says through John: "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture in the cup of his indignation: and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and the presence of the Lamb" (Revelation 14:9–10).

The Greek word for mark is *ch[k]aragma*. It means a scratch, etching, stamp, or badge. It would appear to be something that *could indicate*

some type or form of technology. And today, there are a lot of "technologies" that could easily fit this description and provide the necessary surveillance or tracking methods government operatives would need to monitor our habits and behaviors for whatever nefarious reasons they are seeking.

As we progress into the future, the globalists' need for control increases upon the world's population. Living within government regulations may become more invasive due to the many global operatives from a variety of institutions, like healthcare (CDC/WHO), food production (FDA/WFP), climate control (WMO), natural disasters (FEMA), or social unrest (ICJ) and war (DOD). Could all potentially be causes/reasons for the government to step in under a *guise* to mandate an *action plan* upon the people for surrendering their rights and to make personal concessions to their lifestyles.

Now you may say this scenario is "far-fetched," but look what happened to the world just two or three years ago (2020–2023). It didn't take more than three to four months before the *whole world* was shut down, businesses and schools closed, while mankind was propelled into behavioral stipulations that compelled humanity to surrender to mandates—completely affecting

our way of life to the extent that, to this day, the effects are still being felt!

We are living in some very incredible times, when things don't seem to be what they appear to be, or in some cases, because particular policies, events, or situations are so obviously derelict, or plainly wrong, that it's hard to believe it's for real! Questions arise as to why someone doesn't do something about these societal abuses and disrespect for the rule of law—especially here in the USA and Canada? Where is the leadership of the land? What are they thinking? Because it appears it is purposely being done!

For now, the nation is in a "downward spiral" and very combative, especially with a United States presidential election looming. Time will tell where all this tension and hostility will lead; but unquestionably, *prophetic times* are upon us all! Clearly, these are *the days* to draw close to God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, if you're not baptized, I would *strongly suggest* you repent, accept Christ as the Savior and King in your life, and get baptized! This was the same *sound advice* Peter gave to those who asked, which many of us today are asking also: "What shall we do" (Acts 2:37–38)?



College campus protest (above); protesters being arrested (below)



WHICH LORD?

Continued from page 1

belonging to *Generation X*, fondly identify with Harrison's spiritual tune dedicated to the "Lord." Numerous Christian congregations have included it in their worship and song services over the last five decades. A beautiful song for sure, yet upon closer examination, is it a musical "wolf in sheep's clothing"? Is it a lyrical slippery slope into religious ambiguity? Researching the history and development of the song uncovers some interesting facts. Harrison's *My Sweet Lord* was inspired by a desire to praise the Hindu god Krishna, with the additional goal of unifying people of various faiths through the blending of the Hebrew word *hallelujah*, with chants of "Hare Krishna" and Vedic prayer. Author Ian Inglis indicates, "[The] lyrics are not directed at a specific manifestation of a single faith's deity, but rather to the concept of one god whose essential nature is unaffected by particular interpretations and who pervades everything, is present everywhere, is all-knowing and all-powerful, and transcends time and space.... All of us—Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Jew, Buddhist—can address our gods in the same way, using the same phrase ['my sweet Lord']." Statements such as those expressed by the author sound peaceful, utopian, and harmonious; however, is this how the Most-High God of the Bible sees things?

Let's learn a bit more about the song's composition by reading what George wrote about it himself. In his 1980 autobiography, *I, Me, Mine*, Harrison relayed he was deliberate in his using the terms "hallelujah" and "Hare Krishna" alternately in repetition to show that the two terms meant "quite the same thing," as well as to have listeners chanting the mantra "before they knew what was going on"! Harrison's intention was indeed manifested upon the masses, his spiritual "sleight of hand" was quite a success.

Does "Hallelujah" mean the same thing as "Hare Krishna" as George thought? Let's investigate the matter. Key tenets of *The International Society for Krishna Consciousness*

(ISKCON), as listed on the Baltimore chapter website, include:

- We are not our bodies but eternal, spirit souls, parts, and parcels of God (Krishna). As such, we are all brothers, and Krishna is ultimately our common father. We accept the process of transmigration of the soul (reincarnation).
- Krishna is eternal, all-knowing, omnipresent, all-powerful, and all-attractive. He is the seed-giving father of all living beings, and He is the sustaining energy of the entire cosmic creation. He is the same God as The Father Allah, Buddha, and Jehovah.
- The Absolute Truth is contained in the Vedas, the oldest scriptures in the world. The essence of the Vedas is found in the Bhagavad-Gita, a literal record of Krishna's words.
- Before one eats, one offers to the Lord (Krishna) the food that sustains all humans; then Krishna becomes the offering and purifies the offered.
- The recommended means for achieving the mature stage of love of God in this age of Kali, or quarrel, is to chant the holy names of the Lord. The easiest method for most people is to chant the Hare Krishna mantra: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.

How do these principles of Krishna Consciousness compare to the Words of Scripture? Let's examine each of the five bullet points listed above.

- We are not our bodies but eternal...we accept the process of transmigration of the soul (reincarnation). **No!**

Hebrews 9:27: "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (NKJV throughout unless noted).

- Krishna is the same God as The Father Allah, Buddha, and Jehovah. **No!**

Isaiah 46:9-10: "Remember the former things of old, For I *am* God, and *there is no other*; I *am* God, and *there is none like Me*, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *things* that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure.'"

Isaiah 42:8: "I *am* the LORD, that *is* My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images." *The Scriptures* by the Institute For Scripture Research (ISR) translates **Isaiah 42:8** as "I am [YHWH], that is My Name, and My esteem I do not give to another, nor My praise to idols."

- The Absolute Truth is contained in the Vedas. **No!**

John 14:6: "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to



the Father except through Me."

John 17:17: "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."

Psalms 119:60: "The entirety of Your word *is* truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments *endures* forever."

- Krishna becomes the offering and purifies the offered. **No!**

Hebrews 10:10: "By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*."

Ephesians 5:2: "And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."

- Achieving the mature stage of love of God ... is to chant the holy names of the Lord (Hare Krishna.) **No!**

1 John 5:3: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome."

John 14:15: "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

Psalms 135:1-5: "Praise the Lord! Praise the name of the Lord; Praise *Him*, O you servants of the Lord! You who stand in the house of the Lord, In the courts of the house of our God, Praise the Lord, for the Lord *is* good; Sing praises to His name, for *it is* pleasant. For the Lord has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His special treasure. For I know that the Lord *is* great, And our Lord *is* above all gods." *The Scriptures* by ISR translates **Psalms 135:1-5** as "Praise Yah! Praise the Name of [YHWH]; Praise, you servants of [YHWH], Who are standing in the House of [YHWH], In the courts of the house of our Elohim, Praise Yah, for [YHWH] is good; Sing praises to His Name, for it is pleasant. For Yah has chosen Ya'aqob [Jacob] for Himself, Yisra'el [Israel] for His treasured possession. For I know that [YHWH] is great, and our Master is above mighty ones." Mighty ones being another way of saying gods.

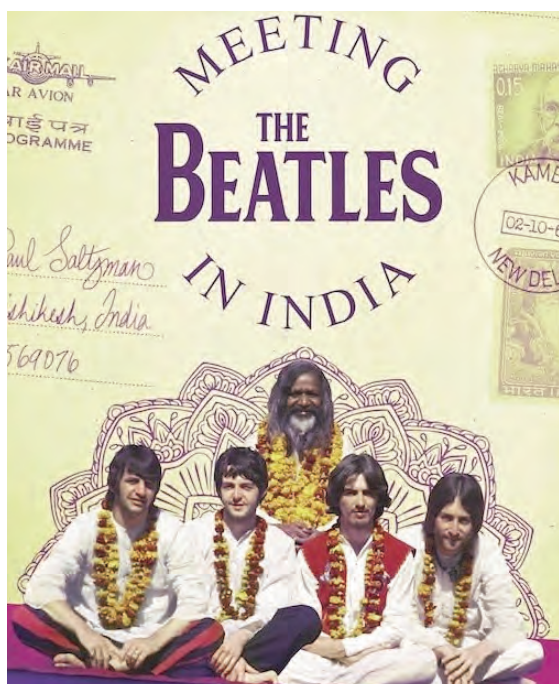
The ISR version of this Psalm removes all ambiguity regarding who is being praised. This is not any "god"; this is not a generic "god," nor a foreign god. This is not referring to Krishna or the

Hindu god Vishnu. This is Yahweh (YHWH) the Living God of the Bible—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Our God is not the same god as Harrison's Krishna. Our Elohim sees us demonstrate our love for Him when we obey His Commandments, as the Apostle John wrote in his first letter as quoted above. We do not show our love for the Almighty by simply endlessly chanting the name of some *other* mighty one, a *strange* foreign god.

Returning to the question surrounding George's assertion that "hallelujah" and "Hare Krishna" mean "quite the same thing"—**no**, they do not! Hallelujah translates into "Praise the Lord," or more accurately according to the original Hebrew text, *Praise Yah*. Strong's word **H1984**, "Halal," meaning to praise, and Strong's word **H3050**, "Yah" (a shortened version of **H3068**, "YHWH," or Yahweh). This is the eternal Name of the true God, as we find in the book of Jeremiah. *The Scriptures* by ISR translates **Jeremiah 16: 20-21** as, "Would a man make mighty ones for himself, which are not mighty ones? Therefore see, I am causing them to know, this time I cause them to know My hand and My might. And they shall know that My Name is [YHWH]!" References to Yahweh are found throughout the Bible, including Exodus, the Psalms, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and many others.

This is quite different from the worship and praise of Krishna. *Yogapedia* defines the *Hare Krishna Mantra* as such:

"The Hare Krishna mantra is a sacred Sanskrit verse, recited as a means to cultivate awareness of a higher power and revive God-realization, known as Krishna consciousness. Rooted in the *Vaishnava* tradition of Hinduism, the Hare Krishna mantra is mentioned in the *Kali-Santarana Upanishad* and is central to the path of *Bhakti Yoga*." In his book *Here Comes the Sun: The Spiritual and Musical Journey of George Harrison*, Joshua Greene translated some of the Hindu chant lyrics in *My Sweet Lord* as, "I offer homage to my guru, who is as great as the creator Brahma, the main-



Continued Next page

Continued from page 5

tainer Vishnu, the destroyer Shiva, and who is the very energy of God.” These Hindu beliefs are in complete opposition to the Holy Scriptures! Yahweh the Father is the God of the universe, and His Son, the Word, created all things as recorded in the first chapter of the Gospel of John. Brahma is not the creator; Vishnu is not God.

The vagueness of the title “God” can cause confusion at times if we are not careful. Think of the ambiguous concept of a “higher power” as incorporated into a program such as Alcoholics Anonymous. The *Spero Recovery Center* website states the following: “A “higher power” can be broadly defined as any entity or principle that is perceived as being greater than oneself...it might refer to a deity, the universe, destiny, or the laws of nature. However, one’s interpretation of a “higher power” is often subjective. The interpretation is oftentimes shaped by personal beliefs, experiences, and cultural background.” Some may call a “higher power” God, while others may not. Even if they refer to their “higher power” as “God,” which god do they mean? According to the *Spero Recovery Center*, it is likely many do in fact make a “**god’ in their own image,**” one based on their own personal experiences, feelings, and desires.

The concept of a “**god’ in their own image**” can also be found in political speech. Think of how many times we have heard phrases like “God bless America and may God protect our troops” at the end of a presidential speech. President Biden has expressed this sentiment many times. Which God is Biden referring to? Is it the true God of the Bible? Is Biden in alignment with the Living God of the universe when he embraces abortion, homosexual marriage, and transgenderism? Imagine the responses elicited at the end of a Trump campaign rally, if instead of closing with some version of *God bless America*, he ended the event saying, “May the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Father of our Master Yahshua Messiah, bless America”? A closing such as this would certainly give MSNBC something to talk about for a few days!

Much of our increasingly secular world operates under a **lukewarm**



approach to religion, and to God Himself. There is an increasingly prevailing attitude that, although we use different names, we worship the *same* entity around the world (at least for those who suggest being religious). This is simply not true! **Acts 4:12:** “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” This Name of course being Jesus the Christ, Yahshua Messiah. The road to life is narrow and focused as we find in **Matthew 7:13–14:** “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

As the days of deception draw near, it is critical to understand who we worship, and what His expectations are. False prophets and false belief systems are foretold in the Scriptures as a warning to us. Revelation describes a Beast power that will control most of the earth with its false system. **Revelation 13:8:** “All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” While we can’t be certain of how exactly this one-world religion will take shape, we can see the shadowy outlines of it being drawn. Pope Francis has held many meetings with leaders of various religious groups over the last few years. In 2021, he visited the city of Ur in Iraq. Pope Francis said, “This blessed place brings us back to our origins, to the births of our religions.... Today we, Jews, Christians, and Muslims, together with our brothers and sisters of other religions, honor our father Abraham....” As with

Harrison’s *My Sweet Lord*, the message seems innocent enough on its surface; however, is the intention of “going along to get along,” laying the foundations of lukewarm belief in the fundamental tenets of the Scriptures, as well as the supremacy of the Family of Elohim: The Father and the Son?

As the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, what fellowship does light have with darkness? Allah is not Yahweh. Yahweh **is our** God! Islam and Judaism are not compatible with original apostolic teachings. As an example, the website *islamic-studies.info* posts a commentary on the Quran called *Towards Understanding the Quran*. The summary regarding Quran sections 5:70–5:75 states, “In these few words the Christian doctrine of the divinity of Christ is repudiated. The nature of the Messiah is clear from the indications given here he was merely a human being.... They have woven a Messiah out of their imagination and have deified that imaginary being.” This belief is clearly contrary to the Holy Scriptures. It is also important to remember John’s words in his first epistle to the faithful in Messiah. **First John 4:3:** “and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.” John’s message was directed to all who did not believe in the resurrection of our Messiah, including the unbelieving Jews of his day.

The **true** religion is of Yahweh alone, *not* Vishnu, Buddha, Allah, or any other generic god. Our Ever-Living God does not share His glory with any other. He is a jealous El

(God), as we are told in the Commandments of the Covenant set forth in tablets of stone, which were given to us through Moses at Sinai. **Romans 12:18** instructs us to “live peaceably with all men”; however, we should never compromise on our adherence to the Word of God. There is no room for compromise! God does not change. Recall how serious Yahweh was about religious compromise. **Deuteronomy 12:1–3:** “These *are* the statutes and judgments which you shall be careful to observe in the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth. You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. And you shall destroy their altars, break their *sacred* pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place.”

It is important to be in harmony with our Elohim. He has many Names, yet He has revealed to us His personal Name, Yahweh. At times, it becomes necessary to remember His *unique* Name, as it gives us the ability to identify Him, and to *distinguish* Him from all other “gods.” His Name does more than simply identify Him. His Name tells us about His character and His reputation. We begin to understand Him through the knowledge of His Name. His Name is synonymous with His authority. The healing of the lame man in the third chapter of Acts demonstrates the authority of His Name. **Acts 3:6:** “Then Peter said, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.” We also see the authority aspect of His Name in Paul’s letter to the Philippians. **Philippians 2:9–11:** “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

If we are truly obedient and adherent to the call of our Father, the true God of the Bible, we must always keep the following verse in mind. **Matthew 10:22:** “And you will be hated by all for My Name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.” As the days of darkness approach before the coming of our Redeemer, we should expect to be hated, *not celebrated*, as if we had written a world number one bestseller.

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ENOCH*Continued from page 1*

By the fifth century, the Book of Enoch was mostly excluded from Christian biblical canons, and it is now thought of as Scripture only by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church.

There are a number of problems when you compare the Bible to 1 Enoch. We do not have sufficient space to address all of them, but we will address the most egregious issues.

According to the Bible, the “serpent” deceived Eve and she took the fruit and ate it (**Genesis 3:1-6, 13**). In 1 Enoch 69:6 (R.H. Charles translation; 1 Enoch 68:6, Laurence translation) Gadreel (a fallen angel) deceives Eve into taking the fruit. Let’s not forget who the serpent is in the Bible (**Revelation 12:9**). It is Satan the devil, so the two books disagree on who deceived Eve.

The Bible and 1 Enoch also disagree on the character of Abel. In the Bible, Abel is spoken highly of (**Genesis 4** and **Hebrews 11:4**). In 1 Enoch 22:5-7 (R.H. Charles and Laurence), we read that the spirit of Abel (in death) makes a suit against Cain that his seed should be killed from among the seed of men on earth. The first issue here is how Abel could be making a declaration against Cain if he is dead. The Bible teaches there is no conscious awareness in death (**Psalms 6:5; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10**). The second problem is the Bible never utters a word about Abel speaking against his brother. **Genesis 4:10** is figurative language about Cain’s blood crying out from the ground. The writer of 1 Enoch may not have known this.

Once you do some research on 1 Enoch you learn about several contradictions with what the Bible has to say. Perhaps the most famous part of 1 Enoch is the first section of the book where we read the story of the fallen angels having sex with human women to breed a race of giants (1 Enoch 7). The writer of Enoch got the idea for this story from **Genesis 6:1-4**, where we read about the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men” coming together to mate. This union seems to produce Nephilim. But verse 4 seems to make it clear the Nephilim were **men**. If we read the account in Genesis carefully, we learn that there is no mention here of angels. Here is the account in the King James Version: “And it came to pass, when **men** began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the **sons of God** saw the daughters of **men** that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with **man**, for that he also is **flesh**: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also, after that, when the **sons of God** came in unto the **daughters of men**, and they bare **children** to them, the same became mighty **men** which were of old, **men** of renown.”

Note that in these four verses we don’t read anything unusual. In fact “men” is used throughout the verses to indicate the context of the discussion. If there were angels cohabitating with human women, don’t you think the

writer could have made that clearer in the text? I think so. Notice we read about “men” in verse 1. “Sons of God” and “daughters of men” in verse 2. And the children born of this union are described as “men” in verse 4.

Now notice **Genesis 6:5-6**, which immediately follows. If we believe these two verses are summing up what has happened in the first four verses of this chapter, why is there no mention of the angel’s part in this sin of marrying human women? We read only about the wickedness of man. Why no mention about God being grieved in making the fallen angels if they participated in some sinful action?

Some argue that “sons of God” in verse 2 refers to angels because that phrase is used of angels in **Job 1:6; 2:1; and 38:7**. The Septuagint version of Job uses the word angels instead of “sons of God.” But keep in mind the writer of Job was not the writer of Genesis. The book of Hosea also mentions that men can be considered sons of God (**Hosea 1:10; 11:1**). **Hebrews 1:5** mentions the fact that angels are not God’s sons; that privilege is reserved for humanity (**Hebrews 2:5-18**).

Another problem with the idea angels had sex with women is what Jesus says in **Matthew 22:29-30**. When questioned about a woman who had many husbands and who would be her husband in the resurrection, Jesus said that those in the resurrection (the next life) we will be like angels. In other words, the implication is that angels do not marry or have sex.

But if you still are not convinced, I hope you don’t believe in 500-foot-tall giants which supposedly came from this union of angels with women. In fact, other translations of 1 Enoch have the giants reaching almost a mile high in size. Where are the bones of these individuals? That’s much bigger than the largest dinosaurs.

If the idea for angels mating with humans is not biblical, where did it come from? Remember the book of 1 Enoch was written during the time of Hellenism. Greek influence on culture was at its zenith. The myths about the Greek gods having sex and children with human women were well known. Characters in Greek mythology like Hercules (half man, half god) have some similarities to the giants described in 1 Enoch. The Greek myths were written down hundreds of years before the Book of Enoch.

Another major problem with the books of 1 and 2 Enoch is the description of hell found in these books (1 Enoch 22; 2 Enoch 7). Enoch is taken on a tour of hell where he experiences the cries of the spirits in hell voicing things to heaven. The spirits of the dead occupy this place until the time of the future judgment. Second Enoch also describes the fallen angels torturing the people in hell.

Once again, the Bible is clear; the dead are unconscious and not aware of anything (**Psalms 146:4; 115:17**), and death is repeatedly likened to sleep in the Bible (**Daniel 12:2; John 11:11-14; 1 Corinthians 15:18**). So where does this concept of a conscious awareness in death come from? You guessed it—from Greek philosophical speculation. Plato wrote about hell years before the writer(s) of the books

of Enoch did, but the descriptions are very similar.

Let us keep the Greek theme going. First Enoch 19:2 (Charles translation) also mentions “sirens,” which are probably familiar to some of us through Greek mythology. Sirens were half-human, half-bird creatures known for their sweet-sounding voices. In the story of Jason and the Argonauts, Jason must be tied to the mast of a ship when passing the sirens so he does not steer the ship toward the sound coming from the rocks near shore. The women who cohabitated with the bad angels in Enoch become sirens. Since sirens were seductresses, the idea fits with the notion that the “daughters of men” had seduced the fallen angels. Greek mythology strikes again!

One other aspect of Greek mythological influence on 1 Enoch is the description of waters in heaven as being masculine and waters on the earth as being feminine (1 Enoch 54:8). In Greek mythology, feminine spirits like sirens, nymphs, and nereids were found in bodies of water on the earth. Clouds, rain, and thunder were associated with male deities.

The book of 1 Enoch also makes a false prophecy (1 Enoch 10). According to the book the fallen angels were to be judged 70 generations after the time of Noah. In other words, this is when the final judgment would occur. If we use the Bible (**Luke 3**), the 70 generations should have ended about 140 years after the time of Christ. We are even 2,000 years removed from that time. Obviously, this prophecy did not come to pass. Another reason to not put your trust in the book of 1 Enoch.

Another astounding story in the book of Enoch pertains to the birth of Noah. According to the story in 1 Enoch 106 (1 Enoch 105, Laurence translation), Noah is a strange child indeed. He is born with eyes that light up a room like the sun. When he was born, he could immediately converse with the Lord. Why don’t we read any of these amazing things in the Bible? Probably because Noah was not born with laser beam eyes!

Perhaps the greatest heresy in 1 Enoch is the hinting and finally outright statement that Enoch is the Messiah! Keep in mind that not much is provided in the Bible on the life of Enoch. In **Genesis 5:24** we learn about Enoch being taken, or translated, by God so he would not see death. But we know Enoch died like all men (**Hebrews 9:27**). Proof is found in **Hebrews 11**. In verse 5 we read about Enoch’s great faith. Other patriarchs are mentioned as having great faith too (**Hebrews 11:4, 7, 8**). When we get to **Hebrews 11:13**, we are told **these all died!** That includes Enoch and the other named patriarchs.

The mystery surrounding this figure was very intriguing to people, so much so that Enoch may have been turned into a Messiah figure because of it. Remember, some believed Enoch went to heaven even though that is not mentioned in the Bible. The idea he went to heaven led some to speculate he was better than most of the rest of humanity.

One hint about Enoch occurs when he is told to read books in heaven which have all the deeds of mankind

written down (1 Enoch 80:1-2, Laurence; 1 Enoch 81:1-2, Charles)—not only the deeds of the past, but the deeds of the future. After reading it, Enoch confirms he now has all the information down pat. That’s an amazing accomplishment for a human. It sounds like a godlike quality. Enoch is also made into a liaison for God to communicate with the fallen angels. Once again, an interesting task for a human being to take on.

According to Jim Garton in his book, *The Book of Enoch Debunked: Who is the Son of Man and Elect One in the book of Enoch?* “Many may be surprised to learn that the Book of Enoch promotes Enoch as God’s messiah. The Son of Man, Anointed One, and the Elect One seated on the Throne of Glory is Enoch.

“The writers of the Book of Enoch hijacked the reputation and good name of an ancient patriarch (Enoch) to give validity to their false messiah figure. Perhaps frustrated for the Jewish Messiah to appear, the multiple writers of whatever Jewish cult, decided to create their own messiah, and they called their messiah Enoch. The Book of Enoch is the ‘Book of Revelation of Enoch,’ like the Book of Revelation in the Bible is a revelation of Jesus Christ... In chapter 71, the Son of Man is revealed. Who is the Son of Man? In the 1893 R.H. Charles edition it reads: ‘And he [the angel] came to me [Enoch] and greeted me with his voice, and said to me: “Thou art the son of man who art born unto righteousness, and righteousness abides over thee and the righteousness of the Head of Days forsakes thee not” (1 Enoch 71:14)... In plain English, the angels said to Enoch, “You are the Son of Man that is born to righteousness and righteousness dwells over you...” This is what R.H. Charles originally wrote in 1893, which clearly pointed to Enoch being the Son of Man.

“Charles also confirmed in a footnote that 71:14 proclaimed Enoch as the Son of Man.

“The footnote reads, ‘(6) lxxi.14 “Thou art the Son of Man who art born unto righteousness and righteousness abides over thee,” is an application to Enoch of the words used of the Son of Man in xlvi.3 [46:3]’

“Unfortunately, in his 1912 edition, Charles changed the wording of chapter 71 without any textual or historical support. Charles did this after he was influenced by unsubstantiated conjecture put forth by a German scholar named Heinrich Appel.

“Many scholars understandably had a problem with the fact that Enoch 71:14 said Enoch is the Son of Man (Messiah). Heinrich Appel said, ‘this very striking phenomenon that Enoch here is the Messiah...should have made the interpreters startled.’ Most scholars were ‘startled,’ as Appel put it, but instead of allowing Enoch 71:14 to read the way it was originally written, many of these scholars, like Charles, meddled with the text and rewrote it to imply 71:14 pointed to Jesus. This is precisely what Charles did in his 1912 translation.”

Keep in mind the warning of Jesus in **Mark 13:21-22**. He warns us there will be false Christs and false prophets. Were the writers of 1 Enoch

Continued next page

Continued from page 7

trying to lead people astray to focus on a false Christ?

Also, note **2 Timothy 4:4**. Here we are warned not to be turned away by Jewish fables. First century Christians were aware of books like 1 Enoch and the dangers in regarding them as Holy Spirit inspired. They were not, and the evidence is their contradiction of the true Scriptures!

Another argument that is made by proponents of the Book of Enoch is the idea that the book is quoted in the Bible. Some contend that **Jude 1:14–15** is a quote from the book of 1 Enoch 1:9. Let's look at a comparison between the two sets of scripture.

Jude 1:14–15 (KJV): "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to **convince** all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

First Enoch 1:9 (Charles manuscript; 1 Enoch 2:1 in Laurence manuscript): "And behold! He cometh with ten thousands of His holy ones to execute judgment upon all, and to **destroy** all the ungodly: and to convict all flesh of all the works of their ungodliness which they have ungodly committed, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

Note the difference in the Bible quote. The word "convince" ("convict" in NIV) is used rather than "destroy" in the book of Enoch. Christ is not coming to kill everyone on earth;

when He returns there will still be human beings left. Note **Revelation 20:3**, which tells us Satan is put away for 1,000 years so he can't influence the nations. The nations will still have flesh and blood humans (**Zechariah 14:16–19**). Those who turn to spirit at Christ's Second Coming can't be influenced by Satan. This is a major point because the Book of Enoch suggests all humans will be destroyed at the end of the age, while the Bible is clear there will still be humans on the earth who survive the end of the age before the Millennium begins.

The Enochian account (1 Enoch 1:4) says God is returning to Mt. Sinai when He returns to the earth, while **Zechariah 14:4** tells us He is coming back to the Mt. of Olives.

Another important point to note here is Jude does not say he is quoting from the Book of Enoch. Rather he says that Enoch "prophesied" about this. The reason that is important is because many other times in the Bible other specific books are mentioned (**Joshua 10:13; Numbers 21:14; 1 Kings 14:19, 29**). If it was a quote from the book, why not say so? If it was not a quote, where did the information come from?

It is possible the prophecy of Enoch could have been part of an oral tradition attributed to Enoch. Remember in the ancient world things were not written down like they are today. Oral traditions were much more common. An example of this can be found in **Genesis 50:24**. Joseph gives directions on how he wants his bones to be handled after he dies. Over 400 years later (**Exodus 13:19** and **Joshua 24:32**) we read that Joseph's wishes were followed. The writer of Genesis was not

Joseph. Some believe an oral tradition was passed on for hundreds of years about what Joseph wanted done.

Others say **Jude 1:6** and **2 Peter 2:4** are also getting their information from the Book of Enoch. Once again, this view is highly suspect. These scriptures talk about the fallen angels as being in some sort of prison due to their sin until the day of judgment. Supporters of Enoch say these scriptures are relating to the Book of Enoch saying the fallen angels are in "hell" due to their sin of having sex with women.

First of all, **Jude 1:6** and **2 Peter 2:4** do not tell us what the sin of the angels was. The Bible also speaks of Satan's rebellion against God (**Ezekiel 28; Isaiah 14; Luke 10:18**) when he tried to take over authority from God. That would be a sin also. The Greek word translated "hell" in 2 Peter is *tartaroo*, which is a prison of some sort, but this prison is not the pagan conception of a flaming underground hell.

Obviously, we know from Scripture that Satan can still reach heaven (book of Job) and demons can take up residence in human beings (**Matthew 9:32–33; 12:22;**

17:18; Mark 5:1–20; 7:26–30; Luke 4:33–36; Luke 22:3; Acts 16:16–18). So, whatever *tartaroo* is it is not necessarily a physical place from which these spirit beings cannot escape. The language of being in chains of darkness could relate to a spiritual type of prison. There are other examples of descriptions like this used for men who are not following God (**Psalms 107:14; Isaiah 42:7; Isaiah 49:9**). So rather than agreeing with the Book of Enoch, the Scriptures in **Jude** and **2 Peter** give us a completely different take on what happened to the fallen angels. Much like spiritually lost humans, the fallen angels are in a spiritual type of prison of their own making. They are doomed to be judged at the time God chooses to do so (**Matthew 8:29**).

There is plenty more that can be said of the evidence from the book of 1 Enoch that makes it clear the book should not be considered Scripture. Second Enoch and 3 Enoch are even more outrageous. Read what you like, but please understand there are very good reasons why these books are not considered the Word of God.

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On the Canon of Scripture

QUESTION: How can we know for sure which books belong in the Bible? What about the apocryphal books and the various "Gospels" that were not included in the canon? How can we know for sure whether or not our Bibles are complete?

Condensed from a question sent by email

ANSWER: I'm happy to offer some information, but a thorough answer would require much more space than is available here. For this reason, I'm giving you a brief overview on the biblical canon, and then, toward the end of the discussion, will suggest some books for further investigation.

It is clear that Jesus and the disciples recognized a particular set of books as God-breathed Scripture (see 2 Timothy 3:16). Paul calls these inspired writings the "oracles of God" and says they had been committed to the Jews (Romans 3:1–2). There is no evidence within the New Testament of disputes among the disciples of Jesus regarding which books made up the Scriptures they frequently referred to. On the contrary, the multitude of New Testament quotations from the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings leave the clear impression that there was universal agreement on which books were regarded as inspired of God.

In the Gospels, Jesus makes numerous references to these God-inspired books as "the Scriptures." He states that *every part* of inspired Scripture refers to Him. This is what He is affirming in His reference to the threefold division of the Hebrew Scriptures—"the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms" (see Luke 24:44–45; cf. v. 27). Then, as we read through the New Testament, we see that there are a multitude of quotations from the Old Testament, affirming the writers held the same view of Scripture as Jesus; yet, there is no explicit reference to any of the books of the Apocrypha.

The Jews who met in the Council of Jamnia (held in either the late first or early second century CE) reviewed the tradition they had received from their forefathers and made no changes. They affirmed the same books their fathers before them affirmed, and those books were the same ones that make up our "Protestant" Old Testaments. Though some of the texts of the Apocrypha were included with the earliest Greek (LXX, or Septuagint) manuscripts, the Jews of the Council of Jamnia did not accept them as Scripture, and their affirmation regarding accepted books reflects the tradition of their forefathers and, as we see from the scriptural references above, is consistent with the witness of the New Testament itself. I am not suggesting that the Jews of that council had any

Questions & Answers

by Vance A. Stinson

kind of special authority; I'm simply saying that their conclusions are a witness to what had been widely understood and accepted at that time and in previous times.

Many Christian apologists and theologians from the early centuries until the Reformation rejected the apocryphal books. It's not as if the Reformers just up and decided to cut out a section of Scripture that had always been accepted without dispute. They excluded the apocryphal texts because the historical witness demanded it! Those texts are

important in that they give us some insight into a certain period of history, but they were simply never a part of the Sacred Scriptures.

The canon of Scripture was not formally defined until the Council of Trent (fourth session, April 4, 1546). It happened then because the Reformers had challenged it, stating that the apocryphal books were not authoritative Scripture.

Now, on to the New Testament. A common belief today is that the New Testament canon came about as a result of one group having its way through aggressively going after and stamping out competing groups, all of which operated under the broad umbrella of "Christianity." The "victims," of course, were probably kinder, more loving, and more tolerant and accepting of other groups. The more aggressive and less tolerant winners went on to form the Christianity that has come down to us. They tossed out (and burned) the books that didn't fit their narrow, carnal-minded, patriarchal philosophy.

Of course, that's a lot of nonsense! Manuscripts and fragments from the early patristic period show, by the multitude of quotations from existing New Testament writings, that the Gospels and many other of the books we find in our New Testament were accepted as apostolic—and therefore considered inspired of the Holy Spirit—very early; and when we examine Gnostic texts today, it is clear that these came later and obviously draw heavily from authentic Christian documents and stories that preceded them. The Gnostic philosophy comes across very clearly, and it quickly becomes clear to the unbiased reader that so-called Gnostic Christians were in a very different religious and philosophical category than the wider Christian community.

The Christian community of the post-apostolic period had no central authority that had the responsibility of preserving all inspired New Testament Scriptures. Instead, the many churches that made up the Christian community were themselves a witness to the apostolicity of the

COVENANTS

By ARNIE FONTAINE



Our ministry has covered this topic over time. Here is an overview from their teachings in part:

What are the origins of the covenant principle?

Down through history mankind has contracted or covenanted agreements. The term to “cut a deal” has been handed down through the centuries in one form or another. There are two parties, be they individuals or groups, involved. The American Indians “cut” deals to become blood brothers. The Pilgrims in 1620 went into covenant. Notice this excerpt:

Having undertaken, for the Glory of God, and advancements of the Christian faith and honor of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the Northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents, solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic....

Mankind understands the concept and has been going back into antiquity.

Modern Christendom seems to think on the lines of two covenants in Scripture; and yet, upon further review, it is more like a starting point of origin and a common theme in a series of covenants to bring us to a proper relationship ultimately with God.

The biblical covenants are usually given by God from the beginning with Adam and Eve as the first. This means the guidelines/conditions are established by God. They can be conditional or unconditional. A relationship is established between the parties involved, each typically with responsibilities. At this point we should realize the importance of each covenant, big or small, as a turning point in history. Decisions made propelled God’s plan forward. They were defining moments in the lives of those involved.

We begin in **Genesis 2:15** with God giving Adam a place to live and responsibilities. Please note that Adam had no say, nor did he try to alter or bargain the deal. The rest of the chapter deals with Eve’s introduction and their relationship. Moving on to Chapter 3 we find a new set of agreements with the three sinners. Each is told of subsequent circumstances that shall be part of their lives and, by extension, the lives of all humanity. Verse 15 begins what is called *protoevangelium*.

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He will bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

It is the beginning of the gospel. The central promise to mankind starts here.

From the woman Christ will be born in the distant future, with the “bruising” occurring between Christ and Satan. Implicit in each stage is that man will fail but God won’t. His plan will unfold.

The next step is with Noah and all the circumstances surrounding the preparation, destructive flood, and the unconditional covenant. God gives a sign or pledge as a guarantee of this irrevocable covenant with the rainbow. For the “Seed” that is Christ to become a reality, God had to save mankind from himself.

We arrive at **Genesis 12:3** wherein the Seed promise continues, for through Abram all mankind will be blessed.

“And I will bless those that bless you and curse the one who curses you. And in you shall all families of the earth be blessed.”

And further, in chapter 15, God confirms the covenant with the heifer and doves. They “cut” a covenant. And even further, in chapter 17, God lays out the ground rules once more. Keeping in mind that covenants were “cut,” we see the circumcision being established for males. Jews in Christ’s time made this quite the issue, as we well know, to establish a relationship/covenant with God. That was a reason for Paul writing his letter to the Romans.

That covenant continued through Moses.

We pick up the story in **Exodus 19**, where God offers His covenant of national greatness if they are obedient to His laws.

“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.... And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD” (**verses 5, 6, 8**).

But what was the actual covenant? Was it the “old covenant”? Was it the Ten Commandments? Was it the Mosaic Covenant? A covenant is an agreement between parties to adhere to specific responsibilities. It is not the contract itself but an agreement to live by the particulars with stated consequences for abiding or not by each party.

This continues through chapter 24, and we see that the people agree to the covenant.

In **Deuteronomy 30**, a grand prophecy is given telling of human failure and Godly intervention. The Israelites will be scattered and then brought back. A new heart will be given them, and God’s laws will be internalized.

“And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your seed, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live” (**verse 6**).

The law, as we see, was not nor will it be done away, otherwise the prophecy must as well be nullified.

Chapter 30 introduces the new circumcision to come, that of the heart.

In order for God’s plan to come to fruition, a continuous line had to be developed and assured. From the initial Seed promise to Eve on through Noah, it was intact.

Now I would like to continue over in **2 Samuel 7:12–17** wherein we see the eternal kingdom confirmed by God through Nathan the prophet.

“And when your days are fulfilled, and you shall sleep with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you who shall come forth from your loins. And I will make his kingdom sure. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him for a father, and he shall be to Me for a son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not leave him, as I took it from Saul whom I put away before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.”

David’s prayer/response finishes out that chapter. **Psalms 89** establishes the Davidic covenant eternally. This is a wonderful psalm to meditate on this coming Sabbath. Verse 3–4 continues the Seed covenant. Verse 14 gives us hope, and verse 20 reminds us of God anointing David and bestowing His Holy Spirit upon him. God will not take away this eternal covenant through David as we read on especially from verse 26.

“He shall cry to Me, ‘My Father, You are my God, and the Rock of my salvation.’ And I will make him My firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. I will keep My steadfast love for him forever, and My covenant shall stand fast with him. Also, will I make his seed to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake My law and do not walk in My judgments, If they profane My statutes and do not keep My commandments. Then I will visit their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes. But I will not completely take My lovingkindness from him, nor will I allow My faithfulness to fail. I will not break My covenant, nor change the thing that has gone out of My lips” (**verses 26–34**).

Most of us are familiar with **Jeremiah 31:31**, but going forward into chapter 33 we find another pearl in verses 20–22. Can we stop time?

Hardly. This covenant is unstoppable. **Luke 1:30–33** confirms the Davidic throne in Christ. The beautiful writings of Isaiah resound at this event in chapter 9:6:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

Let us not overlook God’s plan of redemption in all of this. Ezekiel has something to add in chapter 36. Beginning in verse 17, we see Israel up to its ways of sinning and thereby breaking commandments, but that is another study. God prophesies of that future time when the Spirit will be given, a new heart bestowed, and God’s way of life as a guide going to all the surrounding countries to see how to come to God in that covenant relationship. **Ezekiel 11:16–21** only confirms these things.

“Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Although I have cast them far off among the Gentiles, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet I shall be a little sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone.”’ Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.”’ And they will go there, and they will take away all its detestable things and all its abominations from there. Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God. But as for those whose hearts follow the desire for their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their deeds on their own heads,”’ says the Lord GOD.”

What did David know and when did he know it? We find, as we move back to **2 Samuel 23**, that David’s life was coming to a close. God used David as a spokesman and spoke to him. In **verse 5**, David confirms the everlasting covenant through him. In order for salvation to be available, this Seed covenant had to be assured. It may seem redundant, but it is so important that God’s Word keeps hammering the theme home.

The individual covenant with God is outlined in **Jeremiah 31:31**; and yet, to get the full impact of what is being prophesied, we should back up to **verse 27**. God’s people will go through a process of change. Each person will be responsible for his actions. **Verses 30 and 31** introduce that spiritual covenant, and the promise flows

Continued on next page

Continued from page 9

through to **verse 33**.

“Behold, the days come,” says the LORD, “that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and with the seed of animal. And it shall come to pass, as I have watched over them to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so I will watch over them to build, and to plant,” says the LORD. “In those days they shall not say any more, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the teeth of the children are set on edge.’ But every man shall die for his own iniquity. Every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth will be set on edge. Behold, the days come,” says the LORD, “that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which covenant of Mine they broke, although I was a husband to them,” says the LORD; “But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days,” says the LORD, “I will put My law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (**verses 27–33**).

The law that Israel was given and broke will be internalized by God’s power and divine mercy. Sin will be a thing of the past. Read on and realize God’s very Creation is used as surety against this covenant in **verses 35–37**:

“Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for a light by day and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, who stirs up the sea when its waves roar; (the LORD of hosts is His name), ‘If those ordinances depart from Me,’ says the LORD, ‘the seed of Israel also shall

cease from being a nation before Me forever.’ Thus says the LORD, ‘If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be searched out, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done,’ says the LORD.”

The New Testament writings use direct quotes on numerous occasions to make a theological point; these passages pertaining to a covenant are the longest group of scriptures quoted, and we find them in **Hebrews 8:9–12**. Delving into these verses we can break them down into 4 parts thusly:

The Law will be internal.

He will be their God and they will be His people.

Won’t need to teach each other, for all will know God.

Forgiveness, which actually would come first if you think about it.

The transition from external to internal is explained in Hebrews. Please refer to **Hebrews 10:1–18** to see it more clearly. Once again, the writer of Hebrews uses **Jeremiah 31** to make his point.

Part of the Old Covenant granted land inheritance; with the New we have eternal life as the inheritance.

Now to the New Testament. In **Galatians 4**, Paul explains a Christian’s process of adoption into the Family of God. Through Christ’s sacrifice we attain adoption, which gives us full rights as sons. Please compare the various translations of **verses 4–7**:

“But when the time for the fulfillment came, God sent forth His own Son, born of a woman, born under law, In order that He might redeem those who are under law, so that we might receive the gift of sonship from God. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, ‘Abba, Father.’ So then, you are no longer a servant, but a son. And if a son, you are also an heir of God through Christ.”

Additional Scriptures: **Romans 8:15, 23** and **Ephesians 1:5**. It is clear from the Greek that the translators understood the impact of this covenant whatever else may have been misunderstood.

It is so easy to find fault to defray personal responsibility. Such is the case in life and also when reading or misreading Scripture. Rather than self-examination and repenting, too many use projection as one places blame on the wrong individual, thought, action or writings. In “reading” the NT, many don’t really read Hebrews attentively. A case in point is **Hebrews 8:7–8**, where the fault was in the people.

“For if the first covenant had been faultless, then no provision for a second covenant would have been made. But since He found fault with them, He says, ‘Behold, the days are coming,’ says the Lord, ‘when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel the house of Judah.’”

They repeatedly broke the agreement/covenant. It doesn’t say the fault is in the law, but people failing. It demonstrates how mankind needs the Holy Spirit to truly draw close to God. The book of Hebrews lays out the transition from old to new, changing the locus of control from stone to heart. It becomes a process of conversion, as **Psalms 119:9–16** illustrates:

“With what shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; O let me not wander from Your commandments. Your word I have laid up in my heart, so that I might not sin against You. Blessed are You, O LORD; teach me Your statutes. With my lips I have declared all the judgments of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies as much as in all riches. I will meditate upon Your precepts and have respect to Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I

will not forget Your word.”

David teaches us the process of internalizing the law. Go to **verse 105** and continue:

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

The covenants in the Old Testament had no provision for eternal life but a means to a better physical life.

The last Passover that Christ participated in gave us the symbols of the New Covenant, His Body and Blood, bread and wine. Access is through repentance and baptism, as **Acts 2:38** records. Paul reiterates the baptism theme in **Galatians 3:26–27** and **Colossians 2:10–12**.

It was God’s intent to provide for a better way of life physically and spiritually. **Deuteronomy 6** illustrates His wishes for His people from **verse 1–6**. His ways bring a better way of life. His covenant brings a better way of life. The Shema illustrates that covenantal way of life. The Shema is comprised of two parts, even as the Ten Commandments are. Each addresses our relationship with God and humanity. From Mark we read, in **chapter 12**:

“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. And the second is like this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (**verses 30–31**).

Verse 30 is a direct quote from **Deuteronomy 6:5**.

We are *in*—not “under”—covenant with God. There is a difference. Please compare **Deuteronomy 6** and **Leviticus 19:18** with **Mark 12:29–31**. A change of heart towards God to join His Family is the end goal to heal the breach going back to Adam and Eve. The end—or the beginning—of a defining moment for each of us?

The Great Controversy versus the Bible

By WILLIAM BLANK



The following excerpts are from the last two chapters of the book *The Great Controversy*. Each excerpt is followed by passages from the Bible in bold type and comments in italics.

“At the coming of Christ, the wicked are blotted from the face of the whole earth—consumed with the spirit of His mouth and destroyed by the brightness of His glory” (page 657).

Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not

receive the love of the truth so as to be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:8–10).

Note: It is the lawless one (the Antichrist) that is destroyed at the coming of Christ and not all the wicked.

“Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the Lord hath spoken this word. Because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned” (Isaiah 24:1, 3, 5, 6, page 657).

Note: the last phrase of verse 6 was intentionally omitted which says “and few men left.”

“That the expression ‘bottomless pit’ represents the earth in a state of confu-

sion and darkness is evident from other scriptures” (page 658).

“Here is to be the home of Satan with his evil angels for a thousand years. Limited to the earth, he will not have access to other worlds to tempt and annoy those who have never fallen. It is in this sense that he is bound: there are none remaining, upon whom he can exercise his power” (page 659).

“For a thousand years, Satan will wander to and fro in the desolate earth to behold the results of his rebellion against the law of God” (page 660).

Note: See above note and few men left for the words none remaining. Nowhere in the whole Bible does it even intimate that there are other worlds inhabited by unfallen beings. Also, does it sound like Satan is free to roam the earth during the thousand years when the Bible clearly states, “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.

And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time” (Revelation 20:1–3).

“At the close of the thousand years, Christ again returns to the earth, He is accompanied by the host of the redeemed and attended by a retinue of angels. As He descends in terrific majesty He bids the wicked dead arise to receive their doom” (page 662).

Note: Christ does not return at the close of the thousand years because He has been on the earth with the people who were raised in the first resurrection. “Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of

their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4-6).

"You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth" (Revelation 5:10).

"As the New Jerusalem, in its dazzling splendor, comes down out of heaven, it rests upon the place purified and made ready to receive it, and Christ, with His people and the angels, enters the Holy City" (page 663).

Note: The New Jerusalem does not come down until after the destruction of Satan and the wicked (see Revelation 20:7-15; 21:1-2).

"Now Satan prepares for a last mighty struggle for the supremacy. While deprived of his power and cut off from his work of deception, the prince of evil was miserable and dejected; but as the wicked dead are raised and he sees the vast multitudes upon his side, his hopes revive, and he determines not to yield the great controversy. He will marshal all the armies of the lost under his banner and through them endeavor to execute his plans. The wicked are Satan's captives. In rejecting Christ, they have accepted the rule of the rebel leader. They are ready to receive his suggestions and to do his bidding. Yet, true to his early cunning, he does not acknowledge himself to be Satan. He claims to be the prince who is the rightful owner of the world and whose inheritance has been unlawfully wrested from him. He represents himself to his deluded subjects as a redeemer, assuring them that his power has brought them forth from their graves and that he is about to rescue them from the most cruel tyranny. The presence of Christ having been removed, Satan works wonders to support his claims. He makes the weak strong and inspires all with his own spirit and energy. He proposes to lead them against the camp of the saints and to take possession of the City of God. With fiendish exultation he points to the unnumbered millions who have been raised from the dead and declares that as their leader he is well able to overthrow the city and regain his throne and his kingdom" (page 663).

Note: None of the above and most of what follows is in the Bible.

"Satan consults with his angels, and then with these kings and conquerors and mighty men. They look upon the strength and numbers on their side, and declare that the army within the city is small in comparison with theirs, and that it can be overcome. They lay their plans to take possession of the riches and glory of the New Jerusalem. All immediately begin to prepare for battle. Skillful artisans construct implements of war. Military leaders, famed for their success, marshal the throngs of warlike men into companies

and divisions. At last the order to advance is given, and the countless host moves on—an army such as was never summoned by earthly conquerors, such as the combined forces of all ages since war began on earth could never equal. Satan, the mightiest of warriors, leads the van, and his angels unite their forces for this final struggle. Kings and warriors are in his train, and the multitudes follow in vast companies, each under its appointed leader. With military precision the serried ranks advance over the earth's broken and uneven surface to the City of God. By command of Jesus, the gates of the New Jerusalem are closed, and the armies of Satan surround the city and make ready for the onset" (page 664).

Note: When Revelation 20:7-9 says that Satan and the wicked surround the beloved city it is talking about the Jerusalem where Christ will be ruling from during the Millennium—not the New Jerusalem. See Zechariah 14 and Revelation 21.

On page 675 the following paragraph is supposed to be a description of the new earth: "My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat... Mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands" (Isaiah 32:18; 60:18; 65:21, 22).

Note: Verse 65:20 was not quoted which says, "No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, Or an old man who does not live out his days; For the youth will die at the age of one hundred And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred Will be thought accursed." The above passages are talking about the Millennium, not the new earth since no one will die or grow old in the new earth.

There are many other passages in these last two chapters of The Great Controversy as well as the rest of the book that are diametrically opposed to what the Bible clearly teaches.

Revelation 22:18-19 warns: "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book."

Summary

According to *The Great Controversy*, when Christ returns the righteous will be taken to heaven where they will be shown why people are lost and to decide what their punishment will be—as if that would take a thousand years. The earth will be totally desolate during that time.

According to the Bible, when Christ returns the living righteous and the ones that are raised in the first resurrection will reign with Him for a thousand years on earth without Satan's interference. They will be spirit beings

who will rule the offspring of the "few that are left" after the plagues.

An Incriminating Admission

The following article came out in the *Review and Herald* (Seventh-day Adventist publication) which is very revealing. It is from the "Adventist World—North American Division," July 2014, page 41, with the heading: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Teachings—a Few Surprises:

"Although it remains true that the defining doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, such as the Sabbath and sanctuary doctrines, were adopted after intense Bible study and before they were subsequently expressed in the visions of Ellen White, the early letters reveal a few instances in which White's visions broke new theological ground and where biblical study and confirmation followed a little later.

"An interesting example of this is found in White's earliest visions of 1844 and 1845, which clearly maintain that the saints will spend the millennium in heaven, not on earth, as the Millerites taught. As is pointed out in

the notes, however, Joseph Bates, foremost theologian of Sabbatarian Adventism in the 1840s, and James White both retained their earlier Millerite beliefs in an earthly millennium for a year or two after Ellen White's visions before being convinced of the biblical basis for a heavenly millennium."

Roland Karlman, who wrote the above article, is a retired White Estate researcher.

Comment: It is surprising that it is admitted that one of the defining Adventist doctrines is based only on a supposed vision of Ellen G. White. It says three times in the book of Revelation that the saints will reign with the Messiah as kings and priests for a thousand years on earth. Revelation 5:10; 20:4, 6. Anyone who reads the whole chapter of Revelation 20 and Zechariah 14 will clearly see that the saints will be ruling on the earth during the Millennium. The last chapters of The Great Controversy are diametrically opposed to the book of Revelation.

1844

The only distinctive doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination is based on one of the few bad translations in the King James Bible (KJV). The KJV says "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (Daniel 8:14). What is amazing is that they didn't pay attention to the margin, which states that the Hebrew says *evening morning* instead of "days" and *justified* instead of "cleansed." Here is how the Hebrew reads: "until evening morning thousands and three of hundreds and he is justified sanctuary." The fact that it uses "evening morning" instead of the Hebrew word for day (*yom*) shows that it is not talking about the prophetic year-for-day but literal days. Also, later on in the same chapter, it says, "And the vision of the evenings and mornings which was told is true; therefore seal up the vision, for it refers to many days in the future" (Daniel 8:26, NKJV). Here again, it is amazing the Adventists didn't consider this verse.

They incorrectly concluded that the 2,300 days (which they say are actually years), is further explained in chapter 9. They say the vision that the angel Gabriel explained to Daniel in chapter 9 was a further explanation of the one in chapter 8. However, they failed to realize or decided to overlook the fact that Daniel 9 was written 15 years later, and the vision that Gabriel was explaining to Daniel was Jeremiah's vision of the seventy years. See Daniel 9:2. Their conclusion was that the "2,300 years" started at the same time as the seventy weeks and, after some readjustments, finally decided that the Messiah was going to come back in 1844 to cleanse the earth. This was due to their misunderstanding of Daniel 8:14 and the bad translation of "days" and of "cleansed" instead of "justified."

They used the non-biblical lunar-solar calendar to come up with the date October 22, 1844. When the Messiah didn't show up, to save face, they invented the idea of an "investigative judgment," which started October 22 when the Messiah supposedly moved from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary to start deciding who was going to be saved. The book of Hebrews clearly shows that the Messiah entered the Most Holy Place when he ascended back to heaven in the first century. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Hebrews 6:19-20).

In the writings of Moses, the veil (vail) refers to the curtain in front of the Most Holy Place.

"And the vail shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy" (Exodus 26:33). See also Exodus 26:35; 30:6; 40:3, 22, 26; Leviticus 16:15; 24:3. The other curtain in front of the holy place was called the door of the tabernacle. See Exodus 29:4, 11, 32, and 42.

Hebrews 9:12 (NKJV) states, "Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption." Also, Hebrews 10:19-20 affirms, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." That gives significance to the fact that Matthew, Mark, and Luke all say that the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom when the Savior died.

The only thing that happened in 1844 is that a lot of people were misled by William Miller's misinterpretation of the Bible which he later admitted and then a number of them accepted the invention of the "investigative judgment" and eventually became the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.

William Blank

“He hurt her!”

By JAMES FIRE

“Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them” (Psalm 119:165, KJV).

My four-year-old son was watching TV with me. I decided to flip through the channels to find something he would enjoy more than the news. As I flipped, an old black and white western appeared on the screen just as a bad guy pulled the trigger and shot a woman. She slumped over and collapsed. My son was shocked, his eyes and mouth open; in astonishment, he looked at me and said, “He hurt her!” I witnessed what I believe to be my son’s first conscientious offense in his life.

Today, offenses are common. Using a wrong preferred pronoun, categorizing a person through an innocent statement, looking at a person in an unacceptable way, posting an opinion, or commenting on a story, all can be considered offensive in some manner.

What does the Bible say about offenses?

In Hebrew, the word for offense or sin is *chet* (חַטָּא). This word appears frequently throughout the Old Testament and carries various shades of meaning related to wrongdoing, transgression, or simply missing the mark. “Sin” is commonly used to describe offenses, and it encompasses a wide range of wrongful acts, including disobedience to God’s commands, wrongdoing against others, and rebellion against God’s authority. Offenses can take various forms, including moral, ethical, relational, and spiritual offenses. They can manifest as acts of commission (doing what is wrong) or acts of omission (failing to do what is right). Offenses may involve violating God’s commandments, harming others, indulging in selfishness or pride, or neglecting one’s responsibilities towards God and others.

Examples of Biblical Offenses

The story of Adam and Eve in **Genesis 3** is a prime example of human disobedience and the consequences of sin. God had commanded Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but they disobeyed God’s command and ate the forbidden fruit. This act of disobedience resulted in the introduction of sin and its consequences into the world, including shame, guilt, and separation from God.

In **Genesis 4**, we read about the story of Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam and Eve. Cain became jealous of his brother Abel when God favored Abel’s offering over his own. In a fit of anger and jealousy, Cain murdered his brother Abel. This act of violence was a grievous offense against both his brother and God, leading to severe consequences for Cain, including being cursed and banished from the

land.

Second Samuel 11 tells of King David’s adultery with Bathsheba and subsequent murder of her husband Uriah, which is another significant example of offense recorded in the Bible. Despite being a man after God’s own heart, David succumbed to temptation and committed adultery with Bathsheba, resulting in her pregnancy. To cover up his sin, David arranged for Uriah to be killed in battle. David’s actions led to severe consequences for him and his family, including the death of the child born to Bathsheba and ongoing strife within his household. **Galatians 6:7** warns, “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows” (New International Version throughout, except as noted).

Throughout the Old Testament, the people of Israel repeatedly offended God through their idolatry, disobedience, and rebellion. Examples include the worship of the golden calf at Mount Sinai in **Exodus 32**. There was a constant cycle of idolatry and repentance in the book of Judges, and the Israelites’ persistent disobedience and rejection of God’s prophets as described in **Jeremiah 7:25–26**. Despite God’s faithfulness and warnings, Israel’s offenses led to divine judgment and exile.

During Jesus’ trial and crucifixion, the disciple Peter famously denied knowing Jesus three times, despite his earlier declaration of loyalty as told in **Matthew 26:69–75**. This act of cowardice and betrayal was a significant offense against Jesus, especially considering Peter’s position as one of Jesus’ closest disciples. Peter’s denial of Jesus resulted in deep remorse and repentance, but also served as a reminder of the frailty of human nature and the need for reliance on God’s grace.

Consequences of Offense

The conflict between Jacob and Esau, stemming from Jacob’s deception in obtaining Esau’s birthright and blessing, resulted in a broken relationship and division within their family (**Genesis 27–33**). Such an offense can go beyond the family and affect communities and even nations. **Proverbs 18:19** states, “A brother wronged is more unyielding than a fortified city; disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel.”

In addition to strained relationships with others, it can extend to strained fellowship with God. The Israelites’ persistent disobedience and idolatry led to strained fellowship with God, resulting in divine judgment and exile from the Promised Land (as written in **Judges, 1–2 Kings, and Jeremiah**). This results in hindering spiritual growth, leading to spiritual dryness, distance from God, and a sense of alienation. **Isaiah 59:2** declares, “But

your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”

Dealing with Offense

The story of Joseph and his brothers illustrates the power of forgiveness and reconciliation. Despite being sold into slavery by his brothers, Joseph forgave them and reconciled with them when they came seeking help during a famine (**Genesis 37–45**). Through repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation, God can bring restoration and healing to broken relationships and situations marred by offense. **Psalm 133:1** proclaims, “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!” It is key to prioritize reconciliation, seek forgiveness, and extend grace to others, reflecting God’s mercy and love in a broken and hurting world.

Apostle Paul, Expert in Offenses

Saul of Tarsus, known also as Paul, diligently sought out newly converted Christians who were followers of Jesus. His objective was to stamp out this religion with the blessing of Jewish leaders.

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus into the apostle Paul demonstrates the transformative power of God’s grace. After encountering Jesus on the road to Damascus, Saul repented of his offenses and became a fervent follower of Christ, proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles (**Acts 9:1–22**). Despite the gravity of our offenses, God offers redemption and transformation through His grace. Through repentance and faith in Christ, offenders can experience forgiveness, restoration, and a new life empowered by the Holy Spirit (**Ephesians 1:7; 2 Corinthians 5:17**).

Paul addresses the issue of offending others in several of his letters, providing guidance to believers on how to navigate interpersonal relationships and promote unity within the Christian community.

Paul emphasizes the importance of refraining from actions that may cause other believers to stumble or fall into sin. In **Romans 14:13**, he writes, “Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.” Believers are encouraged to prioritize love and consideration for others, avoiding behavior that could lead to offense or division within the body of Christ.

Paul instructs believers to be mindful of the consciences and convictions of weaker brothers and sisters in the faith. In **1 Corinthians 8:9**, he warns, “Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak.” Paul encourages believers to abstain from activi-

ties that may cause offense to those with weaker faith, demonstrating love and sensitivity to their spiritual growth and well-being.

Paul emphasizes the importance of seeking the edification and building up of fellow believers, rather than causing harm or offense. In **Romans 15:2–3**, he writes, “Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: ‘The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.’” Believers are called to prioritize the welfare and spiritual growth of others, seeking to build up the body of Christ through their words and actions.

Paul underscores the importance of practicing love and humility in all interactions with fellow believers. In **Philippians 2:3–4**, he writes, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.” Believers are called to prioritize the needs and interests of others, demonstrating selfless love and humility in their relationships.

Paul emphasizes the importance of resolving conflicts and seeking reconciliation with those whom we have offended or who have offended us. In **Ephesians 4:32**, he writes, “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Believers are called to extend grace and forgiveness to one another, following the example of Christ and striving for reconciliation in relationships. In addition to seeking forgiveness, the Bible teaches the importance of making restitution and seeking reconciliation with those who have been harmed by our offenses. **Matthew 5:23–24** instructs, “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.” This underscores the importance of repairing damaged relationships and seeking to make amends for our offenses.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit and the transforming work of Christ, believers can experience victory over offenses and live lives characterized by righteousness, love, and obedience to God. **Romans 6:14** declares, “For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.” By walking in obedience to God and relying on His strength, believers can overcome the power of sin and live lives that honor and glorify God.

Spiritual Benefits

Resisting the urge to give or take offense fosters a spirit of forgiveness,

which is central to Christian faith. Jesus teaches the importance of forgiving others in the Lord's Prayer, saying, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (**Matthew 6:12**). Choosing to forgive instead of holding onto grudges reflects God's mercy and grace, leading to spiritual freedom and peace of mind (**Colossians 3:13**).

Resisting offense allows believers to demonstrate love and humility, following the example of Jesus Christ. **Philippians 2:3–4** instructs, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." Choosing to overlook offenses and extend grace to others reflects the selfless love and humility modeled by Christ (**1 Peter 2:21–23**).

Resisting offense promotes unity and harmony within the Christian community and fosters healthy relationships. **Proverbs 17:9** states, "Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends." Choosing to overlook minor offenses and extend forgiveness strengthens bonds of fellowship and promotes reconciliation among believers (**Ephesians 4:2–3**).

Resisting offense contributes to spiritual growth and maturity, enabling believers to reflect the character of Christ more fully. **Romans 12:21** encourages, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Choosing to respond to offense with grace, kindness, and forgiveness cultivates virtues such as patience, gentleness, and self-control, leading to spiritual maturity and likeness to Christ (**Galatians 5:22–23**).

Resisting offense reflects an alignment with God's will and purposes, which emphasize reconciliation, love, and forgiveness. **Colossians 3:12–13** instructs, "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord

forgave you." Choosing to respond to offense with grace and forgiveness reflects obedience to God's commands and brings glory to Him.

The Bible teaches that offenses have serious consequences, both spiritually and temporally. **Romans 6:23** states, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Offenses result in spiritual separation from God, broken relationships, guilt, shame, and ultimately, death. Moreover, offenses can lead to temporal consequences such as suffering, conflict, and societal decay.

Despite the seriousness of offenses, the Bible also emphasizes God's offer of forgiveness and redemption for those who repent and turn to Him. **First John 1:9** assures, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, believers can receive forgiveness for their offenses and experience reconciliation with God.

Psychological Benefits

Resisting the urge to give or take offense can offer numerous psychological benefits, promoting emotional well-being, interpersonal harmony, and resilience. While the Bible provides spiritual guidance on forgiveness and humility, modern psychology also recognizes the psychological benefits of these practices.

Holding onto grudges or harboring resentment can contribute to chronic stress, whereas forgiveness and letting go of offenses have been associated with lower levels of stress and anxiety. Research studies have shown that forgiveness interventions can lead to significant reductions in stress and anxiety (Toussaint & Webb, 2005; Lawler-Row & Piferi, 2006).

Studies have found that forgiveness is associated with lower levels of depression, anxiety, and psychological distress, as well as greater life satisfaction and well-being (Toussaint et al., 2001; Witvliet et al., 2001; Maltby et al., 2005).

Forgiveness and humility contribute to greater empathy, compassion, and

understanding in relationships, leading to improved communication, conflict resolution, and intimacy. Research suggests that forgiveness promotes more positive relationship dynamics and greater relationship satisfaction (Fincham et al., 2007; Fehr et al., 2010).

Resilient individuals are better equipped to navigate life's challenges, maintain a positive outlook, and adapt to changing circumstances. Studies have shown that forgiveness is positively correlated with resilience and adaptive coping strategies (Ysseldyk et al., 2010; Harper et al., 2014).

Instead of reacting impulsively or defensively to perceived slights or insults, individuals who practice forgiveness and humility are better able to manage their emotions, respond thoughtfully, and maintain emotional equilibrium. Research has demonstrated that forgiveness interventions can enhance emotional regulation and reduce negative emotional reactivity (Webb et al., 2012; Liao et al., 2015).

Righteous Offense

Biblical examples of righteous offense, where individuals confront or rebuke others for the sake of righteousness and truth, are found throughout Scripture.

Nathan, a prophet, boldly confronts King David after he commits adultery with Bathsheba and arranges for her husband Uriah's death. Nathan uses a parable to expose David's sin and brings conviction to the king, leading to David's repentance (**2 Samuel 12:1–14**).

Jesus confronts Peter after he rebukes Jesus for predicting His upcoming suffering and death. Jesus responds sternly to Peter, saying, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns" (**Matthew 16:21–23**).

The apostle Paul confronts Peter publicly for his hypocrisy in withdrawing from eating with Gentile believers when Jewish believers were present. Paul rebukes Peter for his inconsistency and failure to live in line

with the truth of the gospel (**Galatians 2:11–14**).

Jesus overturns the tables of the money changers and drives out those buying and selling in the temple, declaring, "My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers." Jesus' actions were a righteous response to the corruption and exploitation taking place in the temple (**Matthew 21:12–13**).

The prophet Elijah confronts King Ahab and Queen Jezebel for their promotion of idolatry and persecution of the prophets of the Lord. In **1 Kings 18:16–40** and **21:17–24**, Elijah boldly challenges the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel and pronounces judgment on Ahab and Jezebel for their wickedness.

In **Acts 7:51–53**, Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, confronts the Jewish religious leaders, accusing them of resisting the Holy Spirit and betraying the righteous prophets who foretold the coming of the Righteous One (Jesus). Stephen's bold proclamation leads to his martyrdom.

These are instances where individuals spoke out against wrongdoing, challenged hypocrisy, and stood up for righteousness and truth. While the approach and context may vary in each case, the common thread is a commitment to upholding God's standards and promoting justice, even at personal risk or cost. These examples serve as models for believers today to confront sin and injustice with courage, integrity, and reliance on God's guidance.

Conclusion

The biblical concept of offenses encompasses actions, attitudes, or behaviors that violate God's moral law and standards. Offenses have serious consequences, but through repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation, believers can experience redemption and victory over sin. Such applied understanding provides spiritual and psychological benefits. There are times when standing up for righteousness will be offensive, as we see in the examples and teachings of Jesus and His servants.

CANON, continued from page 8

letters that circulated among them. By the fourth century, CE, there were lists of New Testament documents, and those lists were consistent with the Bible that has come down to us.

Contrary to contemporary "wisdom," apostolic writings were already considered Scripture long before the last apostle died! Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, knew for certain that God, by way of the Holy Spirit, was speaking through him (Acts 2), and that his words were inspired of God and therefore infallibly true. Many of the "Comforter" promises of John 14–17 were specifically for the apostles and the foundational mission they were to accomplish. They understood that God was to speak through them just as He had spoken through the prophets in the Old Testament. That, no doubt, is one reason Peter could confidently include Paul's epistles with "the rest of the Scriptures" (2 Peter 3:15–16). So the modern notion that the apostles did not know they were writing Scripture and didn't know the Spirit rested upon them and spoke through them as it had done with the prophets in Old Testament times is sheer nonsense. This is important because it shows that recognition of the inspiration and apostolicity of those letters is not an idea that came about at a time far removed from the apostles. Even if formal canonization did not occur until much later, that has nothing to do with the fact that the value of those documents was recognized

very early—in the apostolic period itself.

So through all of this we should be able to see that history has left us an adequate witness to the authenticity of the Bible that has come down to us. And it makes sense—it's a logical deduction—that if God saw to it that His "oracles" would be preserved through the Jews, He would also see to it that documents testifying of the Messiah and His assembly would be preserved for His people throughout the ages.

Your questions deserve more than the brief reply I offer here, so I refer you to some books that deal exhaustively with the issues surrounding the canon of Scripture and how we can know which books belong in the Bible. All of them can be purchased through Amazon.com: *The Canon of Scripture* by F.F. Bruce; *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church* by Roger Beckwith; and *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books* by Michael J. Kruger.

I do not endorse all the views of the authors of these books, but I do think that on the critical issues regarding the scriptural canon you will find much helpful information within them. There are other helpful sources, but these three (or either of the three) will supply you with an abundance of evidence that the books that make up the "Protestant" Bible are the ones God inspired and preserved for the benefit of His people.

Faith at Work on My Trip to Meet Brethren in Tanzania

As an ordained elder in the Church of God International, one of my assignments is to visit brethren from other African countries to share biblical doctrines and get to know them better. My one-week trip would see me through four different stop overs. Starting from Tarime, I moved on to Musoma, then Mwanza, and finally to Nzera in Geita.

When it was about time to start a 1,200-kilometers drive into the remote places of Tanzania, I put all my travel gear in place in readiness of any eventuality, I invite you one day to join me in mission work through such roads—especially during the rainy seasons. My excitement was to meet brethren who have been in contact with me for a long time. Some had already enrolled in our Bible school training. As much as I love driving, I only feared for my small car. Before leaving home, I asked God for journey mercies.

Clearance at the Kenya/Tanzania border

As much as we are just neighbours and members of the East Africa Community, I still must get clearance from the immigration department. It took more time because I was using a Kenyan car. It took a bit long to clear but, finally, I was in Tanzania and starting my 1,200-km drive at 5:30 pm.

Worship service at Musoma Tanzania

What a Sabbath morning meeting Pastor Shadrack and a membership of 50 for the first time. They were eagerly waiting for me to arrive. They worship in a rented unfinished Sunday church building; the members contribute to pay the rent. I felt the Holy Spirit in the room when I saw the congregation singing and eagerly listening to the Word of God. I had two sessions, one in the morning and another in the evening. Women and children were more in the church. They seriously need help to build their own shelter. One of members offered a piece of land for them to construct a church hall. Pastor Shadrack and five elders registered with our Christian Bible Centre for biblical studies. Please pray for this wonderful group.



Congregation in Geita, Tanzania

Geita was my centre of interest where three Seventh-day Adventist ministers joined us. They have started learning our way of life. My going there became a big threat to the five large Seventh-day Adventist churches with a membership of over 1,000 each. They literary announced in their worship service that I was going to be there to teach heresy, and they warned their members not to attend our meeting. However, a number of them attended our evening meetings, where we shared the Word until 11:00 pm. Some of the questions I handled were on the three days and three nights, Kingdom of God, Trinity, and Feasts of the LORD. Time was not enough because other people were coming from far away; we did not want them to risk traveling very late at night.

The following day, we had a leaders meeting and strategized how to evangelize. I anticipated to leave at 2:00 pm, but ended up leaving at 5:00 pm.



Heavy rains and storm scared my small car:

Immediately, when I started driving away, heavy rains and a storm fell. My worry was I was driving through a forest for at least one and half hours, and darkness was fast approaching. I had to drive very slowly, as mist was an issue.

I could not view through my windscreen properly. I took a few minutes talking to God and asking for His intervention. I continued driving through this bad road full of potholes filled with rain water. I was very lucky to arrive at the tarmac road. There was a town, but my car was behaving unusual. I knew something was terribly bad. It was 7:30 pm, already dark. I asked for a mechanic. One guy just appeared and, at first sight, I did not trust him, but he was the only option. I requested his service. Soon all my wheels were off, and he pointed at my gearbox and said there must be something wrong with my gearbox, my heart started beating very fast. The reason was that I did not have any money left with me to buy a new gearbox as he was suggesting.



How faith saved my day

I politely told the mechanic without offending him to return everything back to its place and I will come tomorrow morning to see whether we can replace the gearbox. He did exactly that, expecting to see me tomorrow. I paid him for the good work and drove to a nearby hotel. At night, I decided to have a conversation with my Creator, and we agreed that I would not go back to the mechanic. In the morning, I woke up, reminded God on our promise, and drove as if nothing had happened. When I hit the road, the car was as good as ever. I drove without any problem. I feel sure God touched my car. The only challenge I encountered was a flat tire as I was driving into the ferry. This I resolved, though I had to drive from the ferry on my rim. From there I drove 400 kms and rested for the night. The following day I drove home without any challenge. God became my Mechanic.

Pray for our growing work in Africa.

Robert Onsando

Open Church Policy

The Church of God International is an open church.

We have many people attending who are new in the faith. Some will not always keep each of God's laws as they should, and some will not believe everything we teach. We pray that they may be strengthened through the services we render and the examples we set as they come to a closer walk with their God. We request that you be neither judgmental nor base your standard for obedience on what you see your brother do. Christ is our standard, not weak and sinful men. Always remember that you will be judged for what you do, not what others do. Your job is to pray for them, set the right example, and please the Father in all that you do.

In Loving Memory

Patricia Dell Sharp

January 17, 1948 – March 13, 2024

Services for Patricia Dell Sharp, 76, of Tyler were March 23, 2024, at Stewart Funeral Home with Charles Groce and Vance Stinson officiating.

Pat was born January 17, 1948, to Richard L. Trott and Dorothy Ball Trott in Fryeburg, Maine. She passed away on March 13, 2024, after a long battle with Alzheimer's disease.

She was preceded in death by her parents and husband Raymond Sanchez.

Pat is survived by her beloved and dedicated husband, Benny Sharp of Tyler, Texas; daughters, Kimberly Key (husband Mark) of Lubbock, Texas, and Marciline Jordan of Medina, Ohio; brothers, Doug Trott (wife Donna) of Devine, Texas, and Keith Trott (wife Sandy) of Odessa, Texas; stepdaughters, Sandra Klepfer (husband Robert), Debra Dial (husband David), and Dianna Owen; grandchildren, Alex Key, Amanda Estrada (husband Lennon), Michael Key (wife Rose), Vanessa Johnson (husband Tyler), Matthew Key, David Key, Monica Key, Brooke Jordan, Brandon Dial (wife Brandy), Ben Klepfer (wife Courtney), Chris Klepfer (wife Sarah), Patrick Owen (wife Cathlene), Sophia Robinson (husband Blake); and great-grandchildren, Jericho Estrada, Troy Estrada, Miles Johnson, Indi Johnson, Maggie Dial, Madison Dial, Charlee Klepfer, Dwight Klepfer, Isabelle Owen, Alice Owen, Ramona Owen, Archer Owen, and Joan Owen.



Pat graduated second in her class from Permian High School in Odessa, Texas, in 1966, and fourth in her class from the University of Houston College of Pharmacy in 1971. She worked as a pharmacist for Eckerd and Smiths Pharmacy, as well as a pharmacy

manager for Walmart during the twenty-five years preceding her retirement. She was married to Raymond Sanchez from 1972 until his passing in 2000. Pat and Raymond had two daughters, Kimberly in 1974 and Marciline in 1975. In 2002, she married Benny Sharp.

Pat was always on the move. Her hobbies included reading, cooking, quilting, crocheting, cross stitch, gardening, canning, genealogy, ceramics, photography, and traveling anywhere a plane, train, automobile, or ship would take her. If anyone were up for an adventure, she would have her bags packed and be ready to go. She especially enjoyed summer and winter trips across America in the motorcoach with Benny and their traveling buddies James and Deautanne. They made too many trips and memories to count. She also enjoyed attending anything her grandkids were involved in. She was a gracious host and enjoyed cooking and playing games with her family during holidays and visits. When she was no longer able to live at home and moved to Oak Hills Terrace Memory Care, she became the resident decorator and had no problem moving the furniture around on a daily basis if she decided she was ready for a change.

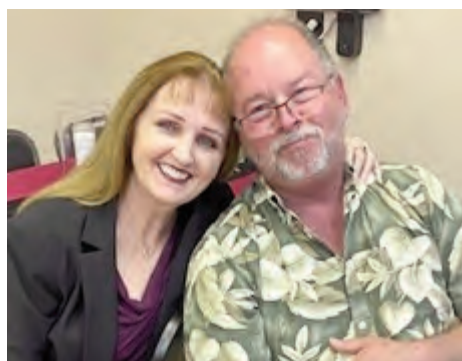
Pat was intelligent, caring, generous, and a fiercely loyal wife, mother, nana, sister, and friend. She will be missed by all who knew and loved her.

Florida Brethren Enjoy Spring Festival Blessings

Spring was in the air and the Auburndale CGI group was busy preparing for the spring holy days. The weekend of Passover was packed with activities and excitement. Our Sabbath service took place, and the next evening was Passover with the foot-washing service. At the Passover service we had 39 in attendance with two individuals who had never been to a Passover service before, such a special night for everyone but especially them.



ABOVE: Ben Falukner
BELOW: Ray & Angie Wendle



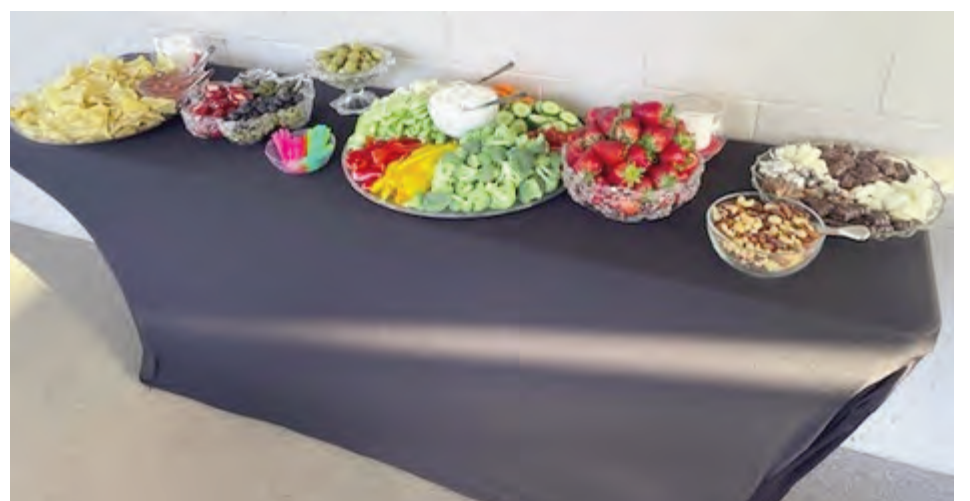
The next evening was the Night to be Much Observed and we feasted on delicious appetizers and wine on our lovely lanai, followed by a beautiful catered meal. The weather was perfect for our outside portion of the evening. Our dessert consisted of an elaborate ice cream sundae bar with many unleavened toppings.

Even though it was a late night for all attendees, we were back together the next day for the First Day of Unleavened Bread where we had 39 in attendance again. We had our offertory message by Ray Wendle with accompanying music by Brenda Pinkerman. We then had special music by a quartet of our members: Jean Harkins, Breanda Pinkerman, Caleb Collins, and Jennings Pinkerman. The sermon, entitled "Free At Last," by our pastor Morgan Pinkerman was very enlightening. After services a group of 25 went to a local restaurant that hosted our first unleavened lunch.

A few short days later, we were back together again on the Sabbath with Tracy French delivering a sermon entitled: "Preparing to Serve God and God's People, Part 3." Mr. French is from our neighboring church, and he meets with us every fourth Sabbath, always delivering a thought-provoking sermon. Finally, the Last Day of Unleavened Bread was upon us. The week went by very quickly according to most. The Church of the Sovereign



ABOVE: the Caterers / BELOW: an appetizing spread of food



God met with us, and their pastor Ben Faulkner delivered the sermon entitled "Lessons of The Last Day of Unleavened Bread." Beforehand, Larry Sharp did the offertory and

Jennings Pinkerman did a piano solo for the offertory music. We also had special music by our sister Gloria McKie, singing acappella. After the

Continued on back page

Continued from page 15

sermon, we enjoyed an expansive potluck meal together.

This was such a special time to renew our commitment to Christ and enjoy being with our church family. Each year we look forward to and prepare for these days, in hopes to renew and fortify our relationship with Christ and with each other through the togetherness we share. It was a true blessing to be able to observe the spring holy days this year and hopefully grow in our understanding of God's plan and our love for one another.

Pam Barnes



ABOVE: the Sharp family / Below: Unleavened Bread banner



Rachel Sharp blowing shofar



ABOVE & BELOW: Brethren enjoying good food at a potluck meal.



Shirley Barnes & Jennings Pinkerman



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