

January 15, 2004

Commentary -- From the Margins *The Real American Idol*

With passing acknowledgment of a television program capitalizing on America's fascination with entertainers and the entertainment industry, no image, logo, or icon is more widely recognized than the empty cross. None will be more recognized for a generation. But the generation will pass. The age will not continue as it has. A new age will come, one marked by a changed human nature, a nature not fascinated with or terrified by death.

A culture that celebrates youth is also a culture that fears death.

I was drafted to reread biblical prophecies two years ago. One year ago to the day or very close, I first realized that the history of circumcised Israel was the visible, physical shadow of spiritual Israel's history in the invisible, spiritual realm. That revelation by realization fueled a year of writing about typology, and liberated typological exegesis from the clutches of tenured academics. The sealed visions of Daniel became readily understandable and teachable. Using typology as a tool, biblical prophecies became a seamless narrative about bringing many heirs of God to glory. Typology provided the logic for why the endtime gospel about patient endurance must be proclaimed to the world before the end of the age comes. It also revealed a second Passover slaughter of firstborns, spiritual and physical, not covered by the blood of the Lamb of God. From the perspective of a year-end review, typology was the biggest news of the year. It shaped dozens of articles and essays as the good news that all who endure to the end shall be saved (Matt 24:13) was proclaimed on the worldwide web at least as loudly as the gospel of Christ's Millennium reign was proclaimed on radio post World War II.

In November, *Google's* Florida update of how it ranks or indexes Web sites introduced the necessity of reworking the sites that were proclaiming *The Philadelphia Church's* gospel of patient endurance (Rev 3:10). Google's adjustment of search engine rankings came just as revelation was coming that all of humanity has been and will be killed by the cross, that the two lawbreakers crucified with Jesus on Calvary represent the entirety of humanity in the day of each person's judgment. All human beings have sinned, and are spiritually as those two thieves were physically. Thus, in the judgment of an individual who says, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us" (Luke 23:39), Christ will deny the person. Jesus has already said, "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matt 10:39), in the same dialogue where He first introduces the gospel of patient endurance (v. 22). It will be the person who acknowledges the justice of his or her death, and asks only that Jesus remembers the person who will be saved (Luke 23:40-43). Jesus' use of *this day*, or *today*, references the day of the person's resurrection (or lifting up) to judgment. And the two crosses on which the two lawbreakers hung, like the cross on which Jesus hung, represent death, not resurrection.

The Apostle Paul assures disciples that the day of the Lord has not come (2 Thess 2:1-3), that those who belong to Christ will be resurrected at His coming (1 Co 15:23), that judgment of disciples will not be revealed before the Lord comes (1 Co 4:5). Thus, the one lawbreaker, his judgment revealed, either preceded Jesus to glory—which is not the case—or symbolically represents the division of humanity that will be glorified on the last day. Since no person was going to come down from a Roman cross alive, the cross cannot represent resurrection, or life beyond death, but rather, the cross represents death itself.

For the cross allowed the crucified person to live for a short while after the person was as good as dead—legal death came with being raised on the cross. The date on which the crucified person actually expired was immaterial, for suffocation could take a day or more.

Thus, *Google's* Florida dance introduced a delay in correcting a literary liberty: even in recent articles and essays, I have referred to the first horseman of Revelation chapter 6 as the man of perdition. I know better, and have known better for most of the past two years, but I have been careless in this assignment of identity. The four horsemen are the four horns that spring up when the great horn of the spiritual king of Greece is broken (Dan chaps 8 & 11) at the second Passover. The man of perdition is the little horn that emerges on the northern horn, or on the head of the fourth beast of Daniel chapter 7. The body of this fourth beast is given over to be burned by the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:11-12), when dominion is taken from the four beasts. But the other three beasts are allowed to live for a season and a time. They are the amalgamated first beast of Revelation 13. The head that has received the mortal wound is of the fourth beast, whose body, again, has been given over to be burned. So when Satan is cast to earth and comes as the true antiChrist, Satan makes an image of this beast's destroyed body. And it is the mark of this beast, or the mark of the image of this beast that all who would buy and sell must bear. That mark is *chi xi stigma* [χξς'], or the tattoo (*stigma*) of *Xx* (*chi xi*); so the appearance of the fourth beast of Daniel 7 is as *Xx*, or as Christ's cross.

The first beast of Daniel 7 is the false prophet, and the fourth beast is cross-shaped. His name is Death (Rev 6:8). And once the Tribulation begins, he is given authority to kill a fourth of humanity. The fourth beast is the spiritual king of the North—and north doesn't represent the geographical direction of God's throne, but Death, personified. When Christ sets His hand to recover Israel from the North Country (Jer 16:14-15), He liberates Israel from bondage to sin, or from the death penalty that comes with sin.

From the second Passover liberation of spiritual Israel from mental bondage to sin to the middle of seven years of tribulation, humanity will be rocked by death. Typology reveals that a third of the Christian Church will die the night of the second Passover because the greater Church refuses to take the Passover as Christ established the example. In addition, the firstborns of the other half of the world will die, so the death toll for that one night could well be a third of humanity. Now add to this carnage that once the four horsemen emerge as world reigning kings, another fourth of the earth has been given to Death over the next time, times, and half a time. Then just before the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Most High and of His Messiah, on day 1335, another third of humanity is again killed by angels released by God. And we can begin to see what Jesus said that if these days were not cut short, no human being would be saved alive (Matt 24:22). The human over-population problem will be supernaturally addressed in a most decisive way.

But why? Why kill so many human beings? Because humanity will not quit worshipping demons, idols, and the works of its hands (Rev 9:20).

All of the above deaths could be avoided if human beings would hear the words of Jesus and believe the One who raised Him from the dead. Jesus quotes the prophet Zechariah about striking the shepherd and the sheep will scatter (Matt 26:31). He identified Himself as that shepherd. And the remainder of that prophecy in Zechariah says, "I [the Lord] will turn my hand against the little ones. / In the whole land, declares the Lord, / two thirds shall be cut off and perish, / and one third shall be left alive" (Zech 13:7-8). And a little quick math will reveal that if a third of humanity is killed in the second Passover, then a fourth of the remaining two thirds is killed (leaving half of humanity), then if a third of the remainder is killed, what is left is one third of humanity left alive, exactly the percentage Zechariah prophesies.

Does that scare you? It should if you worship the Christianity of the Cross. For the principle demon worshiped by Western culture is the Cross. The idol worshiped is the image of the Cross. And the works of human hands worshiped is the youth culture that attempts to physically hide from Death, a.k.a. the Cross.

Google's Florida dance slowed me down enough that I could better identify this fourth beast of Daniel 7—it put me back on a schedule established with the foundations of the universe. I read, last night, in the pages of a slick-paper magazine published by one of the splinters of the former Radio Church of God that God was running out of patience with errant humanity. That is not the case. A farmer doesn't run out of patience with his or her barley crop. The farmer might lose patience with flocks of migrating snow geese that devour the barley before it can be harvested, or the farmer might lose patience with an infestation of moles that bore tunnels under the crop's roots. But the early barley crop takes six thousand years to ripen. God knew that when He planted the crop. He is not now suddenly surprised when gays want to marry, or when the Evangelical Church worships the empty cross in a manner similar to how the Roman Church worships a statue of Mary. Both faiths will deny that they worship idols, let alone a demon, but so too will the two gays that want to marry and adopt children deny that they are governed by a demon. So God is not surprised that humanity continues on a course that will necessitate killing two of every three people now alive. All of humanity will become the holy nation of Israel; all who endure to the end shall be saved. But only a third will live to the middle of seven years of tribulation. This means that humanity will experience death on a scale that is today unimaginable. Needless death. But death because few want to hear the words of Jesus and believe the One who sent Him.

However, when the Holy Spirit is poured unto all flesh (Joel 2:28) and all humanity becomes the holy nation of Israel, the harvest of the earth will have ripened (Rev 14:15). It will become time to gather the barley into the barn, and burn the tares, the grapes of the vine of the earth (vv. 17-20). The earth will be harvested on schedule and as scheduled.

The work that I do will either be ahead or behind the schedule established when the foundations of the universe were strung as many strings under great tension. During fall 2002, it seemed like I had gotten ahead of a schedule I couldn't then read. I believe I was behind that schedule in August 2003, but ahead by the middle of November.

The Florida dance will delay the appearance of the next issue of *Water & Fire*, but it will also make the next issue theologically stronger as the saints of *Philadelphia* fight to win a kingdom for their elder brother, a kingdom He has already won.

Brotherly love means actually fighting for Christ Jesus as David fought Goliath. The ancient Asia Minor city named Philadelphia, now named Alesehir, Arabic for "City of God," was named in honor of Attalus II, the younger brother of Eumenes II, king of Lydia. The city wasn't named to honor this king for him accommodating the enemies of his elder brother, but for him successfully fighting against those enemies then unselfishly giving his victory to his brother. And it is to saints in the spiritual city or church named for this king that Christ Jesus begins His letter, "'I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut'" (Rev 3:8). *Philadelphia's* fight is against Death, whom Christ Jesus has defeated (Rev 1:18). It is a fight won by patient endurance—by enduring in faith or belief to the end. And this is the fight the two witnesses win when it appears that Abaddon has finally defeated them. Victory for all of Israel is in overcoming the Cross in the resurrection to life for all who have done good (John 5:29). The Cross and the false prophet, the first horseman of the Apocalypse, will both be thrown into the lake of fire upon Christ's return as the Messiah. They are no match for Christ, or for disciples who fight for Christ. They are spiritually uncircumcised beasts.

Goliath asked David, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” (1 Sam 17:43). Truth is, he was merely a beast regardless of how imposing he seemed to be.

* * *

January 29, 2004

Commentary – From the Margins *Is a New War Scroll Needed?*

When God sets His hand to recover Israel a second time, He brings His holy nation out of the North Country (Isa 11:11–16 & Jer 16:15). But this holy nation is no longer circumcised Israel. It is spiritual Israel. And north is not a compass direction. North doesn't reference a magnetic North Pole, or the North Star, but rather, darkness. It signifies an absence of light. North is the realm of death. And Assyria is a mental landscape, not the modern nation of Germany as has been taught by the prophecy pundits of Israel. After three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, Jonah went to Nineveh in the physical nation of Assyria. After three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, the glorified Christ went to the spiritual nation of Assyria, which didn't have geographical coordinates, but was the spiritually unenlightened, mental topography of humanity. After a century and a half, physical Nineveh no longer believed Jonah, but returned to its evil ways. As a result Assyria was defeated and captured by Babylon. Likewise, spiritual Nineveh and by extension spiritual Assyria went into Babylonian captivity when the Church, as the second Eve, swallowed the serpent's lie that she would not die just as the first Eve had swallowed the same lie (Gen 3:4).

The linguistic problem of mixing metaphors becomes inescapable when transferring phenomena from the visible, physical universe into the invisible, supra-dimensional realm usually identified as heaven. It is through these mixed metaphors that the activities of human beings, governed by their mental landscapes, form the shadows of (or reflect) events in the timeless, supernal realm. And the mental topography of humanity is just as real as is the physical geography of the earth. It is merely more difficult to visualize a grid of thought stretching from person to person than it is to see physical landscapes.

If human thoughts did not cross dimensions and appear as substance in the heavenly realm, then unspoken prayers would not, nor could not be answered. The essence of understanding the relationship between spiritual and physical is in comprehending the relationship between the spiritual laws of God written on hearts by the Breath of God and the physical laws of God that entered physical Israelites through their ears hearing the uttered Breath of *Yah* of *YHWH* from atop Mt. Sinai. Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said, “You shall not commit adultery.” But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt 5:27–28). The uttered Breath of *YHWH*, in producing the visible (in this case, audible) physical shadow of the invisible spiritual law of love, said, No adultery, one of the Ten Commandments. The Holy Spirit or *Pneuma 'Agion* (Breath Holy) transforms intent, or thought into the spiritual equivalent of action. Mental anger or hate is the spiritual equivalent of the physical act of murder. So Jesus didn't magnify the physical Ten Commandments, He reveals through two key commandments the relationship between the spiritual laws of God that have been written on the hearts and mind of drawn disciples and the old written code. Disciples are to be ruled by these spiritual laws—disciples are to be ruled by their minds, not by the appetites of their flesh. Therefore, all Ten Commandments address the outward actions of disciples, actions that

will or won't occur as disciples are ruled by the laws of God written on their hearts and minds.

In the preceding portion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount—the spiritual equivalent of the *Logos* as the Spokesperson for *YHWH* uttering the physical Law from atop Mt. Sinai—Jesus said,

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matt 5:17–20).

The scribes and Pharisees were hypocrites (Matt chap 23). They had the Law, and they knew to keep it, but none of them were (John 7:19). The scribes and the Pharisees were not keeping the Law of Moses; they were never obedient; they never walked in the ways of God. They were men-pleasers. They sought to establish their own righteousness (Rom 10:3). They never took advantage of God's offer to them of spiritually circumcised hearts and minds (*nepesh*) made in the second covenant of Moses (Deu 29:1; 30:6).

All that is required for salvation is to hear the words of Jesus and to believe the One who sent Him (John 5:24). Nothing more is asked of a person. And Jesus said that whoever relaxes the least of the commandments contained in the Law will be called least in the kingdom, if the person is not a hypocrite. If the person knows to keep the commandments and doesn't, the person's righteousness doesn't exceed that of the Pharisees. And in the person's judgment, he or she can explain to Jesus why He doesn't mean what He seems to say. But if the person when resurrect is experiencing judgment, the person wasn't resurrected to life (v. 29). The person will go into the lake of fire—salvation is just this simple. Hear with the mind the words that are spiritual, and believe by putting into physical practice what the mind has heard. Disciples have spiritual life inside a body of flesh. The spiritual maturation process is a disciple learning to rule his or her flesh by the person's thoughts. And the demonstration of successful rule will be for the disciple's flesh to keep the physical commandments of God.

Jesus said the test would be whether the disciple keeps the least of the commandments. And perhaps the least important commandment is the Sabbath, so whether a person will keep the Sabbath reveals whether the person will keep the weightier matters of the laws of God, written on hearts and minds. The Sabbath is really of great importance as a visual referent for all to see whether a person believes the Father. It is a commandment that can be dismissed with the person still appearing to be spiritually good, but failing to keep the Sabbath demonstrates rebellion toward the Father and Son. So you decide whether you want to hear the words of Jesus and believe them, or tell Him in your judgment that He really didn't mean what He said. The Son will be your judge; He knows what His Father said. And so do you.

Biblical literalists are not really literalists at all. They are, rather, physically minded disciples who remain fearful of the excesses of the equally physically minded Alexandrian allegorists. Two centuries after Christ brought spiritual enlightenment to the mental topography of drawn disciples very few disciples were still hearing His words and believing the One who raised Him from the dead. The allegorists sought enlightenment through flights of imagination rather than through living within the laws of God. And it is their theological descendents that have controlled Christian orthodoxy ever since.

In Qumran's War Scroll, the Sons of Light fight against the sons of darkness. The Apostle John uses the Light versus Darkness metaphor. And in a theological context, light doesn't represent good as much as it does life, with darkness representing death as opposed to evil. Of course, the extension from good to life and from evil to death exists: Jesus said not to be surprised when those who have done good are resurrected to life and those who have done evil are resurrected to condemnation (John 5:29). So doing good leads to life and doing evil produces death, with both good and evil being defined within the context of resurrection from death. Again, doing good is hearing the words of Jesus and believing the One who sent Him. Belief doesn't mean acknowledging Jesus (even the angels believe), but the conscious application of the words of Jesus.

A new war scroll needs written, this one about the saints of *Philadelphia's* fight against the prophets of darkness, Satan's disguised ministers of righteousness. The spiritual birth process has two steps, spiritual maturation within time in a body of flesh, and receipt of a glorified body when Christ returns and the judgment of disciples is revealed (1 Co 4:5). Likewise, the saints' fight against the sons of darkness and their spiritual overlords assumes the qualities of science fiction, as the saints fight within the realm of ideas for control of the mental topography of humanity. Their fight is against both physical opponents with nearly unlimited physical resources, and against adversaries of another dimension, adversaries that cannot be seen or measured. These adversaries are the puppeteers for the sons of darkness, with the principle Adversary able to rule human mental landscapes from his position as the prince of the power of the air (Eph 2:2). Until the second Passover, this Adversary is also able to effect the mental landscapes of the Sons of Light, thereby causing many to abandon the fight as a lost cause—and sending many more down the dead end trail that has a German-led European federation attacking the United States, Britain, and modern-day Israel. This Adversary is the spiritual prince of Babylon (Isa 14:4–21), the nation that overwhelmed back-sliding Assyria. But Babylon will reel under the slaughter of firstborns at the second Passover, when the household of the Father is liberated from spiritual bondage. However, this spiritual kingdom doesn't fall until dealt a second body blow of another slaughter of a third of humanity. The blow that finally knocks it down is the defeat of Death, when the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Most High and of His Messiah.

The fight between the Sons of Light, led by their elder brother Christ Jesus, and the sons of darkness, led by the king of Babylon, will leave two-thirds of humanity dead (Zech 13:7–8). Jesus said in His Olivet discourse that if these days were not cut short, no human being would be left alive (Matt 24:22). They will be cut short by the Father's intervention (Rev 11:15), when the court of the Ancient of Day convenes to sit in judgment of the four beasts of Daniel chapter 7 (vv. 9–12). Satan will be cast from heaven (Rev 12:9), and will come as the true antiChrist. But all of humanity will have received the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28). All will be liberated from bondage to sin. But many will accept the mark of Death, the tattoo of the Cross (*chi xi stigma*).

The Sons of Light fight, and will fight from within time to prevent as much of humanity as possible from accepting the mark of Death, the fourth horseman of the Apocalypse who is also the spiritual king of the North. They fight with their elder brother to rescue Israel from the North Country—and they will not be as successful as they pray, for the many rebellious sons of darkness will continue to prove worthy adversaries. Although these sons of darkness will go into the lake of fire believing that Christ will not really do this to them because of the good and mighty works they have done in His name (Matt 7:21–23), they are truly ministers of evil disguised as ministers of righteousness. They are ministers that teach their disciples to commit spiritual suicide by erasing the laws of God written on their hearts and minds.

Did Jim Jones appear to his followers as a minister of death? The Adversary's disguised ministers of righteousness are a legion of Jim Joneses. And the Sons of Light's mission, if they choose to accept it, will be from within time to rescue the followers of this legion of Jim Joneses. The Sons of Light form the edge of the spear with which Christ deals Death his mortal wound.

* * *

April 11, 2004

Commentary – From the Margins *Thoughts Concerning Same-Sex Marriages*

My focus for the past two years has been eschatology, and delivery of Jesus' words about patient endurance (Rev 3:10). The good news that will be proclaimed to the world as a witness to all nation before the end comes is that *all who endure shall be saved* (Matt 24:13–14). They shall be saved through the kingdom of the world becoming the kingdom of the Father and the Son in the middle of seven years of tribulation (Rev 11:15 & Dan 7:9–14), through the Holy Spirit being poured out on all flesh (Joel 2:28), through Satan being cast from heaven (Rev 12:9–10) so that he can no longer reign as the prince of the power of the air (Eph 2:2). All of humanity will become the holy nation of Israel, the single nation promised to the patriarch Abraham (Gen 12:2). Therefore, I haven't written much about Christian living; I haven't written social criticism. The enormity of death that will occur when the Son of Man is revealed (Luke 17:26–30) at the end of this age will dwarf all other concerns. Much of this death will be needless—will occur because the greater Christian Church will not hear the words of Jesus, nor believe the One who sent Him (John 5:24) by putting those words into practice. The greater Church will not be bodily raptured into heaven at the beginning of the Tribulation, but will be slaughtered by God. A third of the Church will die in one day because it will not cover its sins by taking the Passover cup as Jesus established the example. And this day of Israel's second Passover liberation from bondage isn't far in the future, it is near.

But on a recent trip through mid-America, I listened to a Catholic radio station for nearly 75 miles before the signal faded. The subject under discussion was gay marriage, a subject about which I have remained silent. And the concern of the program was the silence of Christians concerning the sanctity of marriage.

When disciples live within God's laws, they figuratively clean the inside of the cup. The physical or outward practices of these disciples then take care of themselves. The entirety of the cup is clean when its inside is polished through a disciple redeeming his or her time to practice walking blameless by faith before God as Abraham did. Disciples are sons of God, joint heirs with Christ Jesus (Rom 8:29). They will be revealed when the Son of Man is revealed; they will be revealed through liberation from sin, and Christ no longer needing to cover their sins. And those sons who have not practiced walking blameless by faith, thereby following the Lamb of God wherever He leads (Rev 14:1–4), will fall flat on their faces with all of heaven watching.

The above is the essence of Christianity: since the Lamb of God was sacrificed for the sins of the household of God, the household has been roasting with fire and eating the Lamb until the death angels pass through spiritual Egypt or Babylon, slaying all firstborns not covered by the blood of the Lamb. Liberation of the spiritual nation follows this slaughter of firstborns, just as liberation of the physical nation followed the slaughter. Until this slaughter and liberation occurs, the household of God roasts the Lamb with fire through having Jesus bear the household's sins. Jesus covers the sins of

disciples in a manner similar to how a person puts on a cloak: His righteousness cloaks their lawlessness. The household then eats the Lamb by eating His body, symbolized by the broken piece of unleavened bread, and drinking from the cup that symbolizes the blood of the covenant poured out for the forgiveness of sins. And throughout this long spiritual night between the sacrifice of the paschal Lamb of God and the passing of death angels throughout the land, the sons of God were to be practicing walking blameless before God so that when revealed by the light of day they stand and walk as children of faith—so that they don't founder as spiritual infants, still in need of diapers, unable to stand, unwilling to try.

Disciples have the Law of Moses; they do not need further admonishment directed at how they should live their lives. Grace doesn't abolish the commandments of God, but rather covers our violations of them with Christ Jesus' righteousness. We are no longer under the law, but have become the tablets of flesh upon which the laws of God are written. Under the second covenant, the laws of God are written on hearts and minds (Jer 31:33 & Heb 8:10); these laws are not far from us, nor are they too hard to keep (Deut 30:11 & Rom 10:6–8). Paul said that these laws were the righteousness that came by faith. Jesus said that if our righteousness didn't exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, we would not enter the kingdom of God (Matt 5:20). The Pharisees were hypocrites (Matt chap 23). They had the Law of Moses, but none of them kept it (John 7:19). Jesus told mocking Pharisees that if they would not hear Moses and the Prophets they wouldn't be convinced by someone raised from the dead (Luke 16:31). To continue His point, if a disciple today will not hear Moses and the Prophets, the disciple will not hear the words of Jesus or believe the One who sent Him, which Jesus said was how the person receives everlasting life. The Pharisees were keeping their traditions (Mark 7:1–13) rather than the law Moses gave. Therefore, because they would not hear the words of Moses, they would not hear the words of Jesus even when the kingdom of God was among them. Likewise, the greater Christian Church today will not hear Moses, will not hear Jesus, will not believe the One who sent Him, but steadfastly clings to its traditions, received through historical exegesis, even when judgment is upon the Church.

The province of the Church constitutes the entirety of Israel today. Neither the geographic nation identified as Israel, nor the circumcised descendants of the patriarch are the holy nation delivered from bondage a second time. Rather, the Church is liberated from bondage to sin when the Son of Man is revealed at the beginning of seven years of tribulation. These seven years are represented by the seven days of Unleavened Bread when the nation is to live without sin, leavening representing sin. These days begin with the eating of the paschal lamb; spiritually, they begin with the Church taking the Passover sacraments as Jesus established the example. At midnight of the first day, the death angel passed through Egypt killing the uncovered (by the blood of a paschal lamb) firstborns of man and beast. Spiritually, at midnight (the end of the sixth day of the spiritual creation week) the Son of Man will be revealed by death angels passing through all the earth to slay firstborns not covered by the blood of the Lamb of God.

Again a third of humanity and a third of the Christian Church will be killed when the Son of Man is revealed—and the worry of the Church today is marriage between two sons of disobedience of the same sex? Priorities are skewed.

In the sixth year of the captivity, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month, Ezekiel had the hand of the Lord fall upon him while he sat in his house with the elders of Judah before him. Part of what he saw in vision was the Lord say to the man [angel] clothed in white linen, “Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it” (Ezek 9:4). Those Israelites who were not marked by this man in white linen were to be killed beginning at the sanctuary that only the priests could enter. The killing began

in the temple, for the temple was defiled, and from its defilement, the whole land was polluted.

Today, disciples are the temple of God. Jerusalem is the holy city of the Church. And Israel is the spiritual holy nation of God. So when Ezekiel cried out, “Ah, Lord God! Will you destroy all the remnant of Israel in the outpouring of your wrath on Jerusalem?” (Ezek 9:8), God’s answer pertains to the endtime Church.

Then (God) said to (Ezekiel), “The guilt of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great. The land is full of blood, and the city full of injustice. For they say, ‘The Lord has forsaken the land, and the Lord does not see.’ As for me, my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity; I will bring their deeds upon their heads.” (Ezek 9:9–10)

The spiritual house of Israel (Samaria) consists of those denominations that teach disciples that Christ is a created being, either in the womb of Mary or before the creation of the universe. The spiritual house of Judah consists of the denominations that have descended from the school at Alexandria; they are denominations that assign personhood to the Breath of God. And these two spiritual houses have fought as the northern kingdom fought against the southern kingdom following Solomon’s death, with the Vandals’ sacking of Rome being the last victory by the northern house. However, this northern house is prepared to win the next battle fought that results in mass physical deaths.

The land or mental topography of spiritual Israel is filled with the blood of the spiritual infants slaughtered by their parents, the teachers of lawlessness who label living within the laws of God as legalism. And it is these teachers of lawlessness who pray the loudest to God beseeching Him not to forsake the world. They seem to believe that God doesn’t see what is occurring in the world; they don’t see themselves as murderers and spiritual adulterers. They don’t cry aloud about the abominations committed in the sanctuary, or in the temple of God. They cry aloud about the evil of those who are sons of disobedience, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air (Eph 2:2). They cry aloud about the lawlessness of the world, whose beast-like ignorance of the laws of God is its natural covering for its sin (Rom 5:13). Rather, they should cry and groan before God about the lawlessness of the Church.

Let the Church first remove its beam of lawlessness from its eye before it seeks to remove the splinter of gay marriage from the eye of the world. Gay marriage is an abomination to God, but one He will address when the kingdom of the world has become His kingdom.

When the fullness of iniquity arrives, the spiritual nation of Israel will be liberated from bondage to sin that presently dwells in the flesh. Again, this is the sudden event by which the Son of Man is revealed, the event that begins seven years of tribulation. And following liberation, the disciple will be able to rule his or her body through the Holy Spirit. To then return to lawlessness will be blaspheming the Holy Spirit, the unpardonable sin, for no more sacrifice remains for Israel. The Church’s covering for sin will then be its obedience to God. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Christians will be able to walk blameless by faith before God. To not attempt to so walk before God will be denying the Holy Spirit.

But 2300 days before Christ returns to restore all things—about eight months after the Son of Man is revealed—the greater Church will rebel against God. This is the great falling away when the lawless one is revealed (2 Thess 2:3). And the Church will attempt to enter Christ’s rest the following day, the day that the man of perdition identifies as the Sabbath when he seeks to change times and the law (Dan 7:25). This man of perdition will not be a pope, but an Arian Christian, one from the spiritual house of Israel, one who claims divinity for another testament of Jesus.

In all things, the physical precedes the spiritual, and the visible reveals the invisible. The circumcised nation that left Egypt refused to enter the Promised Land, believing the report of the ten spies instead of the two. The spiritual nation that leaves Sin will also refuse to enter the promised land of glorification, believing the ten witnesses instead of the two, believing that the giant of obedience to God is too fearsome to defeat by faith. The circumcised nation was rejected because of unbelief (Heb 3:19) that became disobedience (Heb 4:6) when the nation tried to enter the Promised Land the following day. The nation was turned back. And all of this nation, except for Joshua and Caleb, the two spies with faith in God, died in the wilderness of Sin. The uncircumcised children of this nation crossed the Jordan into the promised land. Spiritually, the half of humanity that doesn't identify itself as Christian when the Son of Man is revealed will be glorified as the children of the spiritual nation—all who endure to the end shall be saved.

All sex outside of marriage transgresses the laws of God, regardless of the human justification for this intercourse. The defining characteristic is heaven is oneness, as in complete unity. Our four dimensions do not exist in heaven. Time, or rather, space-time is part of the creation. Therefore, heaven is a timeless dimension. Whatever is must exist in unity with what will be and what has been. Change is thereby restricted to what will coexist with what is, which made finding iniquity or lawlessness in an anointed cherub (Ezek 28:15) a matter of utmost concern. This necessity for coexistence also allows understanding of the temptation of Eve: self-determination of what is good and what is evil places a being, angel or human, in potential opposition to God. As long as the being agrees with God that a thing is good, no opposition appears or surfaces. But when the being disagrees, this disagreement manifests itself as opposition or iniquity. Thus, those humans who are one with God will obey God as respectful children obey their parents. They will hear Jesus' voice in the Law of Moses, or they will not hear Jesus at all. Evil is nothing more than determining for oneself what is good. The ultimate paradox is obeying the laws of God because the person thinks that the laws of God are good—saints obey the laws of God because they are the laws of God, not because saints think these laws define what is good. Freewill is limited to choosing life through obedience or death through disobedience; freewill doesn't include determining good or evil.

The Pharisees were not the ultimate law-keepers. They were, instead, the ultimate lawbreakers. They used Moses to cover their murders and thefts. In this, they foreshadowed the greater Christian Church that uses Grace to cover its spiritual murders and thievery.

What has been lost is knowledge that Jesus said His kingdom was not of this world, that Christians are drawn out of the world, that they are not to love the world. To set one's mind on the things of the flesh or of the world is death. The person whose mind is set on these things is hostile to God. This person does not submit to the laws of God (Rom 8:7). And this person is the one most concerned about the decay of society and the trampling underfoot of long-held social mores.

Today, I cry and groan about the abominations committed in spiritual Israel and in Jerusalem. Prophecy and typology reveal that the Church will not endure the first half of the Tribulation. It will rebel. And a great delusion will be sent over today's Church so that the Christians cannot repent and crucify Jesus anew. Yes, because today Christians do not love righteousness enough to practice walking blameless before God under the covering of Christ Jesus' righteousness, they will fall when this covering is removed through the fullness of iniquity having arrived.

Today, the holy nation of God is the Church (1 Pet 2:9)—and it is Israel's lawlessness that will cause this nation to believe the report of the ten witnesses instead of the two. It is Israel's lawlessness that will be revealed to be exceedingly sinful when the Church is liberated from spiritual bondage.

The greater Church needs to begin crying and groaning about its lawlessness. Then it will have a platform from which it can cry about the lawlessness of the sons of disobedience. Until then, the greater Church is, itself, a hypocrite. Its righteousness doesn't exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, and it will, in no way, enter the kingdom of heaven.

* * *

August 27, 2004

Commentary - From the Margins

The Port Austin Sabbatarian Community

What happens when good ideas are not thought through, or when unstated conflicting agendas collide? What happens when God's participation has been requested? The Port Austin Sabbatarian Community, a mini-city set upon a hill at the tip of Michigan's geographical thumb, will reveal the answers to these questions over the next few weeks. This city of light, a former Air Force radar site, is already under candid scrutiny by regulatory agencies—a Ryder-style truck owned by one of the trustees was loaned to the former director of the property. Even though the truck had been used by another trustee to make five trips from the East Lansing area, the truck was unlicensed. And the truck was impounded in Illinois when the former property director left it overnight in a public parking lot. The truck appeared too suspicious. It was the color and the type used by Timothy McVey. It had no painted identification on its van-style bed. It had no license, and no business being where it was parked. And it had come from the same county in Michigan as McVey had come.

Instead of questions being asked by the police who were aware of the impounded truck, the vehicle was released to the former site director (his boss is presently in jail for business irregularities). So after paying the towing fee, the former site director left Illinois and returned to Michigan's Huron County. The truck was finally licensed, an oversight that typifies the understaffed, underfunded, and underplanned Port Austin project. The former site director then reloaded the now licensed truck. Another trustee of the Port Austin Sabbatarian Community rode with the former site director back to Illinois, then took the truck on to Missouri. He has since continued on to South Dakota where the trustee will load the truck with the possessions of the individual who is to serve as the librarian for the Community.

Instead of questions being asked by the police, an investigation was begun. The government, State and Federal, for the protection of its citizens would be negligent if it didn't investigate. And because the truck crossed several state lines, Federal agencies should lead this investigative effort.

The question that must now be answered is: When are coincidences not coincidental? How might God enter into the affairs of men to convince individuals that they must walk absolutely upright before Him and before men? Might He use government surveillance and informants? The Apostle Paul, in the 13th chapter of Romans, states that all governmental powers are of Him, and are given for the good of Christians. An obvious argument can be made: governments of men have persecuted and killed many Christian disciples. Jesus, Himself, was killed by entities of the Roman government. The governments of China and of most Islam nations are presently martyring disciples. So can good come from persecution? Of course it can. Christianity is a way of life that rules the minds of Believers. Apostle Paul's new man or creature is a mental creation that resides in the same body of flesh as the old man possessed. This new man becomes the

spiritual Ark of the Covenant, over which grace hovers. This new man contains the two tablets of the law of God—under the new covenant, the law of God is written on the heart and mind (i.e., the conscience) of the Believer. Also in this spiritual ark are rebirth and the promise of glorification, symbolized by Aaron’s budded staff, and the presence of Christ Jesus, symbolized by the jar of manna.

Disciples are the temple of God, created through receiving the Breath of God (*Pneuma 'Agion*). And this inner temple of the mind and conscience fights against the law of sin and death that still resides in the flesh. The fight is, until liberation from bondage to sin, truly to the death of the new man or to the death of the flesh. No quarter can be, nor will be taken. War must be waged. But a war fought for control of the mind, a war fought entirely within the mind; for the mind serves as the inside of the proverbial cup. When the mind has been cleansed, even the outside of the cup is clean. So the war isn’t fought with military arms. It isn’t fought by protest marches, or by political movements. It isn’t fought by picketing abortion clinics, or by clever schemes that seem to promise tax evasion, or by sacred trust agreements. It isn’t fought by claiming all one does is done as a church, and thereby protected under the anti-establishment clause of the First Amendment. No, it is fought by living uprightly before men and God, by walking blamelessly in all the disciple does, by submitting to civil statutes and regulations that have been imposed for the greater good of the nation’s citizen as long as those statutes do not restrict proclaiming Christ to the world. It is fought by paying taxes, and by having love for neighbors, which means not asking the local taxing authority to exclude a particular piece of property from its assessment roll just because the property is used as a church. Such exclusions seem to violate the anti-establishment clause, and such exclusions cause adjoining property owners to pay the cost of providing services to the exempted property. This transferal of costs harms neighbors, thus is anti-love.

The Port Austin Sabbatarian Community is only now thinking through how it should be organized and operated. It will collapse from its own good intentions if it doesn’t radically change courses. One of its trustees has Federal “Top Security” clearance—this trustee has, from the beginning, insisted that everything done is squeaky clean. And this trustee has been frustrated by another trustee who wants to use “church” to conceal the activities of the Community from the eyes of the world. Therefore, a schism has developed among the trustees that threatens to end this community before it truly begins—unless the clandestine surveillance by Federal authorities causes the community to become structurally transparent to all regulating agencies.

To the end that the Port Austin Sabbatarian Community needs the prying eyes of the BATF to cause all of the trustees to walk uprightly, the surveillance and informants are God-sent. For until all of the trustees have matured spiritually enough to realize that they live daily under the observation of angels, those governmental powers that the Apostle Paul says are ordained of God will need to be in place to remind everyone that in everything one does, someone is watching.

Therefore, to those who are watching, thank you for being diligent. I don’t want another Oklahoma City to occur—and the unlicensed Ryder-style truck being left in an Illinois parking lot is too similar, too coincidental to be ignored.

* * *

September 5, 2004

Commentary — From the Margins

More about the Port Austin Sabbatarian Community

The Port Austin Sabbatarian Community (PASC), a city set upon a hill at the tip of Michigan's geographical thumb, appears larger in print than in reality. Even the two towers on the property seem small and inconsequential when hurrying past on the highway. The towers are supposed to generate four thousand a year in revenue, but at least one of the trustees doesn't know who receives the money, or even if the money is being received.

The entirety of the financial structure of the Port Austin venture has been intentionally shrouded in mystery by one trustee. No day-by-day operational budget exists. No inventory of assets exists. No billing entity exists. No trust agreement establishing the purchasing entity exists. Instead, the financial obligations of this project have been primarily met by one 66-year-old, disabled person of color who is beginning to feel put upon. And here is where justice must begin: the light of righteousness must shine upon the organizational and financial structure of PASC. If Port Austin is to become that beacon of righteousness set upon a high hill that the community portends to be, a beacon all the world will see, then business must be conducted in an open and forthright manner. Even as a free-church, the community has the basic obligation to publicly account for income earned and moneys received. The community needs the fiscal support of other Sabbatarians who believe in what this project to live uprightly before God is about, who believe that an assemblage of devout disciples will become an international city of light. The community cannot sustain itself on the generosity of one disabled man, nor on the handwork of a couple of others. It cannot sustain itself on the one-time sale of another trustee's home. It must get its financial house in order so that future donations made to PASC do not disappear into the pocket of any one trustee as has happened.

Christ will not be long mocked. During Jesus Christ's earthly ministry, Judas Iscariot kept the moneybag—Jesus knew beforehand who would betray him; yet He washed Judas' feet a short while before being betrayed. He also knows now who has been foreknown, predestined, justified and glorified (Rom 8:29–30); He knows because of the timelessness of the supernal realm. We don't know, and won't know until we reach that position in this bowl of time when glorification occurs. As fish are confined in the sea, organic life is confined in space-time. Biological life is a product of the created universe, and must, therefore, remain in the universe, for flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom of God. This is the logic behind a second birth, a birth-from-above. It is the spiritual life of this new creature that matures cross-dimensionally. As disciples of Christ Jesus, we grow as the children of God to spiritual maturity in bodies of flesh that can change, that are corruptible, that produce the appetites of the flesh which war with the law of God in our minds (Rom 7:25). The enemy we must defeat is in ourselves, and will be there until we are liberated from bondage to sin at the beginning of seven years of tribulation. Therefore, winning the war against our flesh now requires flight from spiritual Egypt or Babylon; it requires that we build in the province Beyond the River (Ezra 6:6). And the work done will not be by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of God (Zech 4:6). It will be a work of God where all must walk uprightly in a foretaste of spiritual liberation from bondage to sin.

Judas Iscariot remained as one of the Twelve from the day he was chosen by the Father as the son of destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled (John 17:12) until Satan entered into him, thereby causing him to betray Jesus. Nehemiah was opposed by Sanballat and Tobiah throughout the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls. So it should come as no surprise to find betrayal and opposition within the Port Austin Sabbatarian Community if this community is indeed the work of God. And moving from physical to spiritual, betrayal will come as spoilage does in a bushel of apples.

Physical betrayal is easy to identify: one person (or many) delivers the person[s] betrayed to civil or physical authorities, or to a mob. But spiritual betrayal is not easy to identify: it comes as taint to one's righteous. It is insidious. A disciple has another disciple take a license plate off a vehicle and put it on an unlicensed vehicle so the second vehicle can be driven on a public highway. Yes, both disciples know what has been done is legally wrong, but no one was harmed. There was no victim so no crime was committed, or so the first disciple argues—this first disciple has spiritually betrayed his brother by causing his brother to do what his brother knew was wrong. He has sold his brother out to sin. He is a murderer. And the only civil crime committed was the minor offense of swapping a license plate, a misdemeanor, which, even if stopped by a police officer, would not be considered serious.

Christ Jesus can bear all of the sins of disciples. He has, as the reality of the *Yom Kipporim* goat sacrificed on the altar, paid the price of humanity's physical lawlessness. And as the reality of the Azazel goat, He bears the sins of born again disciples in the supernal realm. Two goats. Both sin offerings. One annually sacrificed. One alive in a far land, with the sins of Israel read over its head. One sacrificed at Calvary. One alive, seated at the right hand of the Father, symbolically roasted and eaten in the disciples' taking of the annual Passover sacraments.

Spiritual betrayal grieves Father and Son as a disciple blasphemes the Holy Spirit through causing a brother to stumble in the heavenly realm. The Spirit goes where it will (John 3:8). We are unable to directly see into the heavenly realm where life imparted by the Breath of God (*Pneuma 'Agion*) matures as that new creature born-from-above in a body of flesh. We are unable to see ourselves as God sees us, unless we look into James' perfect law of liberty, the mirror in which we can see our growth in Christ Jesus. Therefore, when one trustee of the Port Austin Sabbatarian Community drinks deeply of the patriotic nectar distilled by Constitutional anarchists (this nectar spread across the Internet as an ephemeral flystrip to catch these anarchists), the other trustees suffer from his legalistic impediment. This suffering has caused one trustee to spend two and a half times as much on this project as he intended. Justice for him now requires that even a whiff of patriotic perfume be too much stench to be tolerated.

The Port Austin Sabbatarian Community will succeed, but it cannot continue as it has begun. Spiritual betrayal must be resisted. All of us here are affected by this betrayal. And while it is my desire that the cause of this betrayal be permanently removed through a changed mindset, that might not happen. We might well wash our Judas' feet to see if we will. Jesus did. Can we? Can I?

When Sanballat mocked the work being done by Nehemiah, the chamberlain prayed, "Hear, O our God...Do not cover their guilt, and let not their sins be blotted out from your sight, for they have provoked you to anger in the presence of the builders" (Neh 4:4–5). This is a harsh prayer, but this is a plea for justice—and it is justice that I seek today.

* * *

September 8, 2004

Commentary — From the Margins *The [Port Austin Sabbatarian Community](#)*

At the tip of Michigan's geographical thumb, on a former Air Force base, a few Sabbatarians—Christians who observe the seventh day Sabbath rest—began gathering in

the spring of 2004. Their purpose was to form a non-denominational community that would become a light to the world, a community that has the ability to care for elderly Sabbatharians, a community able to educate Sabbatharian youth, a community open to the public, a model community. This remains their purpose as the community strengthens through the addition of new arrivals. And though projects planned to begin during the first summer have been placed on hold as the foundation of the community solidifies, the community survives intact, with the grass mowed and the poultry fed.

The community has had its detractors, but what is of God cannot be stopped. And this community is of God. Thus, this community can be examined—it will withstand scrutiny, for if disciples will judge themselves, they stand in need of no further judgment. And the disciples within the greater community are judging themselves.

There have been many religious communities in America's history. Some have lasted for generations. Others have ended in disaster. New England was founded by Dissenters who sought to separate themselves from the polluting influence of a corrupt church with its politicized ministry. Early 18th-Century Sabbath-keeping in Pennsylvania established a community that, a half-century later, ministered to the medical needs of George Washington's army (General Washington confiscated the colony's paper, some sheets ready to be bound into books celebrating God). America's religious communities produced the simplicity of furniture design appreciated today, fueled the underground railroad, opened the desolate intermountain West. And one more community is forming that will straddle this world and the world to come. When the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Most High and of His Christ (Rev 11:15), the Holy Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh (Joel 2:28). No longer will the world be divided between Christians and non-Christians. The kingdom of heaven can then be likened to ten virgins awaiting the arrival of the Bridegroom who seems to tarry, an archaic word that conveys the equally archaic concept that not everyone who is of Christ is known by the glorified Christ. Because many Christians do not love righteousness enough to practice walking blameless when they are given a lamp to be a light to the world, a great delusion is sent over them. They neglect to fill their lamps. The giant of obedience, they believe, is too large to defeat. When they had the chance, they lacked the faith necessary to fill their lamps with the oil of righteousness. So they are unable to attend the wedding feast—their unbelief caused them to look to Babylon for light instead of filling their lamps during the long spiritual night between when the Lamb of God was sacrificed and the spiritual nation leaves spiritual Egypt or Babylon.

The shadow or type of these ten virgins is found in the 600,000 Israelites that left physical bondage in Egypt, and the 601,000 uncircumcised children of the Israelites that left Egypt. Moses numbered these children on the plain of Moab, where the second covenant mediated by Moses was given to Israel (Deut 29:1). Under this physical second covenant, upon demonstrated obedience Israelites would receive circumcised hearts and minds or souls (*nephesh*). The better promises of the second covenant when the mediator changed from Moses to Jesus is that disciples receive circumcised hearts and minds prior to obedience. And with the cloak of Grace blotting out the transgression of the spiritual nation, disciples under the second covenant are to fill their lamps with righteousness so that their lights shine as the beacons of many lighthouses.

Once many lighthouses lined the shores of Michigan's geographical Thumb. Global positioning satellites have turned these lighthouses into curios.

A global positioning system with Christ Jesus as its head now has returned many beacons of light to the tip of the Thumb. The Sabbatharian community at Port Austin isn't one denomination—it will feed and nurture the spiritual reality of the seven churches on that ancient mail route through Asia Minor, with these seven northern churches represented by Joshua upon his return from the promised land, represented by the seven

pairs of clean animals that entered the ark, represented by individuals living as lights to the world, living as a city set on a hill.

* * *

September 14, 2004

Commentary — From the Margins *What Does It Mean to Dwell in Booths?*

For the past three-quarters of a century, the tradition of the splintered churches of God has been to relocate one's physical self to a temporary dwelling where God has allegedly chosen to place His name during the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths. These locations are inevitably near vacation meccas. Families have saved a second tithe (i.e., a second full ten percent of their annual income) that they spend at festival sites where they reside in temporary housing while attending church services, fellowshiping, and enjoying the geographical location chosen for the Feast. The justification for saving a full tithe and going to an exotic location comes from the assumption that Feast of Tabernacles commemorates Christ's millennial reign over humanity, that Feast-goers are to learn to live as if they were in the kingdom of God for that week. Thus, the tradition has Feast-goers enjoying the finer things of life during this week as a sample of how life will be lived during the Millennium.

The modern tradition of Christians observing the Feast of Tabernacles stems from Herbert Armstrong's reading of Leviticus 23:42–43: "You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God" (English Standard Version used throughout). Although other Christian sects or fellowships might have continued observing the annual Sabbaths of God from their Reform or Puritan roots, the practice of such observance fell out of favor before the end of the 18th-Century. Thus, Armstrong had only his reading of Scripture and the practices of rabbinical Judaism with which to work when he established the customs of his Radio Church of God. His successors have since de-emphasized or have quit observing annual Sabbaths, leaving only splinter sects that separated from his successors to continue the practices and customs he established.

The assumption that the Feast of Tabernacles commemorates the futuristic millennial reign of Christ begins correctly. However, the practice of living as kingly priests misses what will be the abiding characteristic of the Millennium, this characteristic being the lack of lawlessness from having the Holy Spirit poured out upon all flesh. Throughout the symbolic day of the Lord, human nature will be a changed nature. Even the nature of beasts will be changed: the great predators will become grass eaters; the lion shall lie down with the lamb. There will be no harm in all of God's holy mountain.

Again, human nature is a received nature as seen in Scripture when Nebuchadnezzar lived and thought as a beast for seven years. This statement cannot be substantiated by direct observation, but comes by revelation; hence, it is not an arguable premise. Presently, the spiritual king of Babylon as the prince of the power of the air reigns over the mental topography of all living creatures that have not mentally died to sin or lawlessness. At the end of this present age, this king will be toppled by the Son of Man. Then, for a thousand years the glorified Christ will reign as the prince of the power of the air. Human nature will become His nature. And even animals will experience peace from His cross-dimensional reign over mental landscapes.

To a non-Believer, the above paragraph is nonsensical. Even many Believers will struggle with the idea that human nature is something other than fixed with the specie. But through typology and considering what dwelling in booths represents, the concept of being dead to sin and of receiving a changed nature can be visualized. For the concept of living as kingly priests misses the significance of the first clause of Leviticus 23:43 — “that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.” Dwelling in booths for the circumcised nation commemorated liberation from bondage to Pharaoh and symbolized the period in that nation’s history when God led His first-born son (Ex 4:22) by a pillar of fire at night and from a cloud during the day.

The people brought out of Egypt did not enter God’s rest because of unbelief (Heb 3:19) that became disobedience when they tried to enter the following day (Heb 4:6 *cf.* Num 14:39–45). Instead, their children entered the geographical land that symbolized God’s rest.

Under the leadership of Joshua and Caleb, the children of the Israelites that left Egypt physically swung swords and defeated in battle the peoples that possessed the hill country of Judea. Hornets as promised under the Sinai covenant (Ex 23:28) didn’t drive out the Hivites, Canaanites, and Hittites. Rather, obedience to God that came with faith caused the children of the people who left Egypt to prevail militarily (Josh chap 7).

The writer of Hebrews links the geography of Judea with the millennial rest of God, as did the Psalmist: “For forty years I [God] loathed that generation and said, ‘They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways.’ Therefore I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest’” (Ps 95:10–11). Physical lawbreaking is done with the hand; spiritual lawbreaking is done with the heart. And the circumcised nation went astray in their heart. They went astray spiritually even though they had seen the many miracles done in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the Wilderness; even though they had heard the voice of God uttered from atop Mt. Sinai.

Warning disciples against “an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away” (Heb 3:12), the writer of Hebrews says, “But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (v. 13). It is the deceitfulness of sin that caused the nation that left Egypt to rebel against God. It will be the deceitfulness of sin that will cause the spiritual nation to rebel (2 Thess 2:3) when this nation is liberated from bondage to the law of sin and death that presently dwells in the members of disciples (Rom 7:25). The writer of Hebrews establishes the link between Judean geography and Christ’s reign over the heart (i.e., mental topography) of all humanity. Physical kings reign[ed] over physical landscapes, but spiritual kings reign over the minds and hearts of human beings. The circumcised nation was ruled by an old written code, inscribed by the finger of God on two tablets of stone. This law was always outside of the holy nation as were the houses in which this nation dwelt after it entered the Promised Land.

Except for Joshua and Caleb, the Israelites that left Egypt dwelt in booths or tents until their deaths; they never again dwelt in houses, nor possessed orchards or vineyards. They never again experienced a sense of permanence, or an attachment to “place.” Once they left Egypt, they were sojourners until they died in the Wilderness of Sin because of their unbelief, their hearts hardened from the deceitfulness of sin. And the correspondence between unbelief and lawlessness joins the rebellion in the Wilderness with the rebellion of the spiritual nation when the man of perdition is revealed.

Before the Israelites left Egypt, they dwelt in houses (Ex 12:7, 22–23). The holy nation again dwelt in houses that they did not build when they possessed the Promised Land. Dwelling in booths, then, symbolizes that period of Israel’s journey from physical bondage in Egypt to when Israel under Joshua possessed the Promised Land. Dwelling

in booths does not symbolize living as rightful heirs in the Promised Land; it doesn't symbolize living as kingly priests. Rather, it symbolizes living by faith under the laws of God in a landscape named the Wilderness of Sin. And the nation that began this journey was replaced by an equally large nation: about 600,000 men on foot journeyed from Rameses to Succoth (Ex 12:37). When Moses numbered Israel on the plains of Moab forty years later, Moses found 601,730 men over twenty able to go to war (Num 26:2, 51). Thus, in the Wilderness of Sin, a first nation of liberated Israelites was replaced by a second nation of circumcised and uncircumcised Israelites, both nations similar or identical in number.

The holy nation of Israel that left Egypt represented approximately half of the people then living in Egypt (Ex 5:5). Through the last seven plagues that struck Egypt, God made a division between the people then living in this nation that has come to represent sin, a division based upon genetics. A physical division. God liberated a physical people from physical bondage in a physical land. Then because of unbelief, this liberated nation of physically circumcised males dwelt in booths until their deaths. They were replaced by a like number of their uncircumcised children who also dwelt in booths until this second nation crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land. Only then was this second nation of Israel circumcised (Josh 5:2–7). So this second nation of Israel had only dwelt in booths when the second covenant mediated by Moses was given—under this second covenant, Israelites were promised circumcised hearts and minds or souls (*nephesh*) upon returning to obedience to the laws of God (Deut 30:6). This second nation did not receive physical houses until after physical circumcision. Spiritual circumcision was only offered to this second nation upon them returning to obedience to God; spiritual circumcision required that this nation walk blameless before God as Abraham had (Gen 26:5).

The Apostle Paul introduces a law of faith (Rom 3:27) that becomes the righteousness that comes by faith. (Rom 10:6). Paul then cites the Moab covenant, or second covenant mediated by Moses (*cf.* Rom 10:6–8; Deut 30:11–14). The Israelite who walks blameless before God by having returned to keeping the laws of God has only to “confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead” (Rom 10:9) to be saved. This spiritually circumcised Israelite will, upon resurrection, receive an incorruptible body in which to dwell, the meaning of salvation.

Upon crossing the Jordan, newly circumcised Israelites began occupying physical houses that these Israelites had not built. They didn't design the houses of the Hittites and Canaanites, nor did they plant the orchards and vineyards attached to them. Thus, although receiving already built homes and farms initially seems advantageous what any particular Israelite actually received was dependent upon the former owners' abilities, skills, and sense of style. If the previous owner was a careful builder, the home was sound, but if the previous builder did shoddy work, the Israelite inherited a disaster that required extensive remodeling. Likewise, the Apostle Paul's new creature or man that is created through receiving the Holy Spirit inherits the same body of flesh as was formerly occupied by the old man. If the old man had been a careful builder, the new creature receives a home that is in good order. If, though, the old man had been a sluggard or a drunkard, the new creature receives a house or tabernacle with the out-of-control appetites and addictions of the former occupant.

The Apostle Paul's new man doesn't get to design his (or her) dwelling as he (or she) would like to have the dwelling constructed. Rather, this new creature takes over an existing corruptible body, and has to make war against the law of sin and death that resides in the flesh.

Paul writes, “We know that our old self was crucified with him [Christ Jesus] in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin.... Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions” (Rom 6:6–7, 12). And this juxtaposition of inner life and outer life lies at the center of understanding the new spiritual creation that lives within the physical body or dwelling of the old creature that died with Christ. The new creature lives with Christ. Death no longer has dominion over this new creature. Yet the dwelling in which this new creature resides will die, or will be changed in the twinkling of an eye.

A visualization of the Israelites who crossed the Jordan and occupied Canaanite houses has these houses firmly anchored to the geographical landscape of the Promised Land, but has their occupants coming and going at will. Jesus told Nicodemus, “That which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, “You must be born again.” The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:6–8). Likewise, Paul’s new creature who has been born of spirit is to the person’s body [*soma*] as the Israelites who occupied Hittite houses where to those houses. These Israelites lived in these houses, but they had not built them. They fought to occupy them because the first nation that left their Egyptian houses refused to believe that the nation could cross the Jordan and occupy the Promised Land behind swarms of hornets.

With birth-from-above (being born again or born anew), the old creature dies as did the first nation that left Egypt—and the new creature born of spirit begins replacing the old creature as the second, uncircumcised holy nation replaced the nation that left bondage to Pharaoh. The transition from one nation to the other took forty years of dwelling in booths in the Wilderness of Sin. The transition from old creature to new requires sufficient time to allow for the spiritual maturation of the new creature. And it is the forty years spent in the wilderness and this transition from a circumcised holy nation to an uncircumcised holy nation that is to be commemorated by dwelling in booths during Tabernacles.

The nation that left Egypt and the uncircumcised nation that replaced that first nation were not free to come and go as they wished while they were in the Wilderness of Sin. During the forty years spent in booths, both nations of Israel experienced little freedom of movement. Whereas Israelites, once they occupied the Promised Land, could journey throughout that land, when in the Wilderness, these same Israelites only ventured outside their camp to gather manna.

Jesus identifies Himself as the true manna that came down from heaven; so by comparison, disciples when dwelling in booths only venture outside of camp far enough to daily gather in Christ.

Dwelling in booths represents the death of the old self and the spiritual maturing of the new creature. Dwelling in booths isn’t about learning to live as kingly priests, or to appreciate the finer things of this physical life. It is about learning to walk blameless by faith before God. It is about putting into practice the second covenant made at Moab now that better promises were added to this covenant when the glorified Christ replaced the man Moses as its mediator.

Returning now to human nature being a received nature: with spiritual birth as a born-from above disciple the lawlessness present in the sons of disobedience (Eph 2:2–3) which produces the passions of the flesh, the desires of the body, and the mind and nature of humanity dies. But it doesn’t die immediately. It dies as did the physically liberated, circumcised nation that left Egypt. It dies because of its unbelief. And it is

replaced by a nation that will fight to receive incorruptible tabernacles, just as did the uncircumcised children of the nation that left Egypt.

This second Israel was a nation born in booths, a nation that had no permanent home and would never have permanence if it hadn't crossed the Jordan and fought to occupy a promised land. Likewise, the new creature that comes and goes as the wind today dwells in a booth of flesh, with the law of sin and death still dwelling in the members of this booth.

Physically dwelling in booths for the seven days of Tabernacles commemorates the maturation of the new creature, uncircumcised outwardly but circumcised inwardly under the better promises of the spiritual second covenant. This new creature will enter the Promised Land of glorification because the old man that was liberated from sin at Calvary never believed that he (or she) could defeat the giant of obedience to the laws of God. This old man, like the circumcised nation in the Wilderness, was ever ready to return to a spiritual Egypt or Babylon. And when that nation did try to enter the Promised Land, it did so on the day following when God said to enter His rest.

Living in booths during Tabernacles commemorates the agonizing slow death of the old man, and the growth towards righteousness of the Apostle Paul's new creature. Living in booths commemorates the development of a new nature within every disciple who will be glorified.

* * *

September 23, 2004

Commentary — From the Margins *A Day Late*

When the circumcised nation that left Egyptian slavery now three and a half millennia ago crossed the Sea of Reeds, the nation didn't comprehend the expectation God had of them. This nation didn't realize that it was expected to do what God said when He said it. For 430 years, this nation hadn't seen much evidence that God existed. It could see the Nile, and the annual flooding that renewed the fertility of the region. It could see snakes and spiders, cats and creeping vermin of every sort. It could see the great stone monuments built by former generations of Egyptians. But it couldn't see an invisible God that seemed to have abandoned a people that this deity would identify as His firstborn son (Ex 4:22). So this nation beseeched a God that it didn't know to deliver it from oppression, little realizing that this deity expected from the nation the same type of obedience as the patriarch Abraham had displayed, in that when told to move, Abraham moved (Heb 11:8).

The Apostle Paul claimed that the circumcised nation which crossed the Sea of Reeds and ate manna and drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them set an example that we, as Christians, might not desire evil as they did (1 Co 10:6). The nation that crossed the Sea of Reeds didn't cross the Jordan River, for this nation believed the report of the ten spies. The spies saw the sons of Anak in Judea, and the spies saw themselves appearing as grasshoppers to these legendary giants (Num 13:33). The spies didn't believe that Israel could defeat giants in battle—and the nation agreed with the ten spies and determined for itself to elect new leaders and return to Egypt. This nation died in the Wilderness of Sin.

The reproach of Egypt was the circumcised nation that left Egypt's inability to see what human eyes couldn't observe. It was a mindset natural to humanity. It was a mindset that although religious and desiring to worship God could not see itself in

relationship to a cross-dimensional deity, in a relationship akin to that which a farmer has with a field of wheat or barley that he (or she) has planted.

The relationship analogy of disciples being like wheat or barley was presented in parables two millennia ago. But these parables were not then understood by those who heard them. They have not been well appreciated by those who have since heard them. Human beings don't see themselves as a crop that will be harvested and thrashed, with only a tenth brought into the temple of God (the tithe paid to the Levitical priesthood). What Christian leader would win converts for the Lord by preaching that at the end of the growing season, disciples will be reaped and thrashed. The better (i.e., more saleable) message is that Christians will escape the woes certain to overtake humanity as the population curve overtakes food production and resource extraction curves. The better message is that disciples will prosper in a period of economic chaos, that disciples like the circumcised nation that crossed the Sea of Reeds will spoil the Egyptians, taking to themselves and by extension to God the wealth of the world.

Disciples, like house finches to a winter bird feeder, flock to Christian teachers that bring forth messages about spoiling Egypt, about sowing into these teachers' ministries and reaping physical prosperity in this present age. These disciples eagerly anticipate a bodily rapture to heaven, or escape to a physical place of safety. They don't want to hear that many or most of these disciples will live into that period of thrashing represented by great tribulation, a period in human history when the Church gives birth to many sons of God by experiencing anguish akin to the hard labor pains a woman experiences during human childbirth. They especially don't want to hear that they, because of their teachers, will be rejected by God as was the circumcised nation that crossed the Sea of Reeds. That circumcised nation couldn't enter God's rest because of its unbelief (Ps 95:10–11; Heb 3:19) which became disobedience when it tried to enter the following day (Heb 4:6). Disciples, during that period when the wheat is thrashed, will not enter God's rest (Heb 4:9) because of this holy nation's unbelief that becomes disobedience (2 Thess 2:3) when it tries to enter on the following day, the day that it has traditionally set aside for this purpose.

If I stopped here, Sabbatarians of every flavor would understand what I have written and would agree. But these Sabbatarians need to understand that they, too, will be rejected for unbelief that becomes disobedience when they try to enter God's rest on the following day. For there are not merely fifty-two weekly Sabbaths that disciples are to observe during the growing and harvesting season. There are also the annual Sabbaths, the festivals, one of which is the new moon of the seventh month (Day of Trumpets — Lev 23:23–25). This new moon sets the calendar for the Day of Atonement [*Yom Kippur*] and the high Sabbaths of Tabernacles. And this year, because of the set asides of rabbinical Judaism, most disciples that observe the annual Sabbaths will do so a day late. They will attempt to enter God's rest on the following day, a day designated by the tradition of men so that *Yom Kippur*, on which no work can be done, doesn't greatly burden keeping the weekly Sabbath—*Yom Kippur* cannot be used as a preparation day for the weekly Sabbath. Therefore, most Sabbatarians will work this year on the 10th of the seventh month; most Sabbatarians will work on *Yom Kipporim*, the day of coverings that commemorates Christ being made sin and being sacrificed at Calvary, then bearing the sins of disciples as their glorified high priest.

Jesus of Nazareth is the reality of both goats chosen as the sin offering for the nation of Israel (Lev 16:5). His death at Calvary is the reality of the goat sacrificed on the altar (vv. 15–16). Until the fullness of iniquity or lawlessness is reached, He bears the sins of disciples in the heavenly realm, making the resurrected and glorified Jesus the reality of the Azazel goat (vv. 21–22). And by keeping the fast on the following day, both disciples and rabbinical Judaism attempt to enter the rest of Christ, where He has sat down at the

right hand of the Father, on the following day, just as the nation that left Egypt attempted to enter the Promised Land on the following day (Num 14:40–42).

Disciples who observed Trumpets a day late because they keep the rabbinical calendar will argue that they are not guilty of unbelief as they work on *Yom Kipporim*, using it as the preparation day for what they sincerely believe will be the double Sabbaths of this year. The question must be posed to them is, Are they any less guilty of disobedience than is the disciple who keeps Sunday as the Sabbath? No, they are not.

Sabbatarians need to do better than they have—and they need to realize that disciples who don't yet keep the Sabbath are like themselves. They as the Body of Christ will be revealed for the world to see when the Son of man is revealed (Luke 17:26–30). The fullness of iniquity will then have been reached as the thrashing begins. All disciples will have to then walk blameless before God, for their only covering for sin will be their obedience. And if they try to enter God's rest a day late, they will be rejected as five of the ten virgins were rejected (Matt 25:1–13). This day late rejection pertains to all of the seventy Sabbaths of God: the festivals, new moons, and weekly Sabbaths (Col 2:16).

Another human being isn't your judge; you are. And when Christ returns, He will reveal your judgment (1 Co 4:5). He will disclose those things that you have or haven't done. And by their disclosure, you will hear the determination of whether Christ has ever known you. The doing of great deeds won't help you if you haven't been obedient (Matt 7:21–23), if you haven't heard the words of Jesus and believed the One who sent Him (John 5:24) by putting those words into practice.

The nation that left Egypt died in the wilderness. The uncircumcised children of this nation crossed the Jordan under the leadership of Joshua and Caleb, the two spies who believed God. They were the only two of those who had left Egypt to enter the promised land—and they were two of 600,000, suggesting that not many of today's greater Church will survive the thrashing of the first three and a half years of the Tribulation. Not many disciples are willing to now practice walking blameless before God under the covering of Grace. Instead, they dilly and dally under this covering, ever accumulating the wealth of Egypt, ever seeing only what can be seen with human eyes, ever believing that obedience to God is impossible. The patriarch Jacob wrestled with God all night. His name was changed to Israel, for he prevailed with God. Yet too many disciples won't wrestle with unbelief and disobedience for long enough to realize that by faith these giants can be defeated. Too many disciples have grown too comfortable in spiritual Egypt or Babylon to undertake a journey to the land beyond the river, a mental landscape holy to God.

* * *

October 1, 2004

Commentary — From the Margins

Children of Promise

The Apostle Paul writes concerning the patriarch Isaac and his descendants: "And not only so, but also when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of call—she was told, 'The older will serve the younger.' As it is written, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated'" (Rom 9:6–13 English Standard Version used throughout).

As Americans, our cultural sense of justice tends to minimize the significance of divine election or calling. Our ideals are democratic, with every person created with equal rights and equal opportunity. We claim that this equality is self-evident. And

though we do not fully implement this self-evident equality, we export it to the world, expecting other nations and cultures to embrace values that are really Greek, not Judaic.

Much of America claims to hold Judaic-Christian values without realizing from where the values held come. These values sculpt the conscience of the nation that President Bush referenced in his Maine speech about the difference between us and those who will behead enemies. These values position us in the world community. And these values insist that God loves no one more than He loves someone else, that God is love, that anyone at any time can decide to accept Jesus as the person's personal savior and so receive salvation.

Why was Esau, when still in the womb, hated and Jacob loved? Jacob wasn't honest when he deceived his father to receive the blessing that would normally have gone to the eldest son. He really wasn't an honest cattle breeder for his uncle. He was deceitful. Yet, he wrestled with God—and through doing so he prevailed with God, the meaning of his changed name: Israel.

The patriarch Jacob was not the type of person that Americans would today elect as their president. The deceitfulness of his past would forever be remembered, as it is in Scripture.

The Bible is not kind to its heroes. King David had Uriah the Hittite murdered so he could marry this non-Israelite's wife, Bathsheba. Abraham told Abimelech, king of Gerar, that Sarah was his sister. When Abimelech took Sarah for a wife, God came to the king in a dream and said, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman you have taken, for she is a man's wife" (Gen 20:3). God also told the king, "Now then, return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live" (v. 7). First, Abraham nearly gets the king killed because he hadn't told the king the truth (Sarah was his half-sister, so he hadn't lied), then the king has to ask Abraham to pray for him so that he might live. And we don't read in either antidote the values of America. We don't think of prophets telling half-truths.

Our sense of justice requires that more should have happened to David than the death of his son by Bathsheba—the son, apparently Bathsheba's firstborn, was innocent. Esau was innocent when in the womb. Both were, when their fates were determined, as innocent as the lambs sacrificed on the temple altar as the sin offerings for the lawlessness of the nation. Both were as innocent as Jesus remained when crucified at Calvary. And the American sense of justice requires that the guilty pay for their sins, not the innocent.

Jesus as the Lamb of God is the spiritual reality of ancient Israel's animal sacrifices. He is the offering given by God to redeem all firstborns (Ex 13:2, 15). And in a valid mental stretch, the firstborn of God created when Elohim (singular in usage) breathed life into Adam and created Eve from a rib in Adam's side, thereby creating humankind male and female (Gen 1:27) before resting on the seventh day, is the Apostle Paul's old man in a corruptible body. This firstborn of God, though, didn't include everyone who descended from Adam, but was limited to the children of promise who belonged to the patriarch Israel (Ex 4:22). Nor does the firstborn of God include "all who are descended from Israel" (Rom 9:6). Not all Israelites "belong to Israel" (same verse). The Apostle Paul writes that "it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring" (v. 8). The promise of God, salvation, is the mortal putting on immortality. The children of promise are the Apostle Paul's new creatures born from above in tabernacles of flesh.

The American sense of justice has, within the past century, produced and spread a theology that promises salvation to the fleshly tabernacle once this tabernacle has been redeemed by Christ Jesus. This theology of a bodily rapture would have the firstborn of

God not really ever dying. This theology has Jesus not dying on the cross, but descending alive into hell to preach to wayward spirits. And this theology is Greek to its core.

Not all of Israel belonged to Israel. Not all of the spiritual nation belongs to the spiritual nation. Not all of those called to immortality through election and judgment will receive incorruptibility. Only those who hear the words of Jesus and believe the One who sent Him will receive everlasting life (John 5:24).

The Apostle Paul writes concerning the coming day of the Lord: "While people are saying, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman" (1 Thess 5:3). Jesus compared His coming to labor pains (Matt 24:8). And the woman who will give birth is the second or last Eve, with the seven years of tribulation that will come upon the world being her hard labor pains of bringing many heirs of God to glory.

In Scripture, there are two Adams, the first physical, the last a life-giving spirit (1 Co 15:45). The creation of the first Adam outside of Eden, with Adam there receiving the breath of life (Gen 2:7), the placing of Adam in Eden, Adam's naming of the animals, and the creation of Eve—all [are types of what happened to the last Adam]. Spiritually, the Breath of the Father descending on Jesus as a dove (Matt 3:16), Jesus entering the Jerusalem temple and naming the animals (Hypocrites, vipers — Matt chap 23), and the creation of the last Eve (John 20:22) from a wound in His side—all occur before the glorified Jesus sits down at the right hand of the Father. Thus, the [Sabbath, a type of the] seventh day of the creation week, foreshadows Jesus sitting down at the right hand of the Father. The seventh day of the creation week [of Genesis chapter one is the reality of] the seventh day of a spiritual creation week [remainder of sentence omitted].

The above paragraph has been written many times as have comparisons of the Genesis temptation account with the Greek philosophical temptation of the early Church, with both the first Eve and the last Eve accepting the lie of the serpent that she would not die. What hasn't previously been well addressed is the birth of Eve's first two sons: Cain and Abel.

During the Tribulation, the Church as the last Eve will deliver two sons during the first half of these seven years, and a third son when the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Most High and His Christ at the middle of these seven years of turmoil. All three sons are of promise; all have salvation available to them through having been born from above, a euphemistic expression for having received the Holy Spirit, which imparts spiritual life in the same way that physical breath imparts and sustains physical life.

But there is a difference between the sons. When God had no regard for Cain's offering, Cain became angry. God said to Cain, "'Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it'" (Gen 4:6–7). No sin or lawlessness had yet been imputed to Cain even though his offering to God had been rejected. Cain, himself, had not been rejected. Rather, God tells Cain that if Cain does well, he would be accepted by God just as Abel was accepted based upon Abel bringing God the firstborn of his flock.

The firstborn of Abel's flock served as a sin offering, for sin did not lurk at his door. Spiritually, Jesus as the Passover Lamb of God serves as the sin offering for disciples—His blood, symbolically taken when drinking from the Cup at Passover, is the blood of the covenant poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (Matt 26:28).

Even though the entirety of Christendom knows that sacraments of the Bread and the Cup represent the Body and Blood of their Redeemer, the vast majority of Christians will not take these sacraments in the manner established by Jesus. Because of their unbelief,

because they will not hear the words of Jesus, greater Christianity takes the sacrament however and whenever their particular sect has deemed appropriate.

Typologically, when the last Eve gives birth in the Tribulation, those Christians who take the sacraments whenever and however they choose will spiritually become Cain, whose offering was rejected but who was not himself rejected. However, because these disciples have not covered their sins with the Blood of Christ, they will be required to do well; they will be required to walk blameless before God, without the covering of Grace. In the Tribulation, Grace covers only those disciples whose offering for sin is accepted by God—[they are the oil and the wine whom Sin, the third horseman (Rev 6:6), are told not to harm].

The concept of Grace not extending to both sons of the last Eve is addressed in the parable of the ten virgins (Matt 25:1–12), and in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matt 7:21–23, 24, 26). And this concept will be branded heresy by those who are spiritually of Cain. The concept goes against our American/Greek sense of justice.

Disciples who take the Bread and the Cup on Passover in the manner that Jesus established by example and by command (John 13:15–18; Matt 26:26–28; 1 Co 11:23–27) will also hear Jesus' words about relaxing the least of the commandments (Matt 5:17–19). And the least of the commandments is generally recognized as the Sabbath commandment, the sign made between God and Israel as to who were, who are His people (Ex 31:13, 17).

The physical nation that left physical bondage to Pharaoh did not enter into God's rest because of unbelief (Heb 3:19) that became disobedience when the nation tried to enter the following day (*cf.* Heb 4:6; Num 14:41). Then realizing its mistake when condemned to death, the physical nation acknowledged its sin of unbelief: "When Moses told these words to all the people of Israel, the people mourned greatly. And they rose early in the morning and went up to the heights of the hill country, saying, 'Here we are. We will go up to the place that the Lord has promised, for we have sinned'" (Num 14:39–40). And in acknowledging its unbelief, the nation that left Egypt demonstrated its continuing unbelief by trying to enter God's rest the following day instead of setting "out for the wilderness by way of the Red Sea" (v. 25).

The spiritual nation that will be liberated from an invisible, spiritual kingdom of Babylon at the beginning of the Tribulation will not, with the exceptions of Joshua and Caleb, enter God's rest because of its unbelief. It will rebel against God (2 Thess 2:3), and will try to enter God's rest on the following day, on the eighth day instead of the seventh. And as with Cain, it will not love righteousness enough to walk blameless before God; thus, God will send a great delusion over this nation so that it cannot repent of its unbelief (vv. 11–12). It will be marked for death, for it will accept the mark of the beast.

And this rebelling nation will kill righteous Abel, those disciples who cover their sins with the Blood of the Lamb of God by taking the Bread and the Cup on Passover.

This is and isn't good news. Death seals disciples, and ends their physical trials and torments. And most Sabbath-keeping Christians will be killed by their Sunday-observing brothers during the first half of the Tribulation. This is the reality of Daniel 7:25, the reality of Matthew 10:21–22.

The good news that must be delivered to the world as a witness to all nations before the end comes is that the last Eve bears another son, Seth, or the other half of humanity when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon all flesh, that this third son has only to endure to the end to be saved. The good news that must be proclaimed is that all who endure to the end shall be saved (Matt 24:13–14). The descendants of a spiritual Seth will enter God's rest, will populate Christ's millennial reign over humanity.

All of humanity has been redeemed by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. All of humanity has been made Israel. But we see today, and will see in the future that not all of Israel belongs to Israel.

Salvation requires crucifying the old man, who leaves bondage to sin as the circumcised nation left Egypt. Salvation is for the new creature born as a child of Israel within the tabernacle of the old man. The second covenant mediated by Moses is made with the children of the nation that left Egypt. The second covenant mediated by Christ is made with the new man born from above who dwells in the tabernacle of flesh of the crucified old man. And not all of the descendants of a spiritual Seth will take judgment upon themselves, the reality of crucifying the old man, prior to the coming of the Messiah. The ones who do not take judgment are those who will physically enter God's rest, or live as human beings on into the Millennium. The promise of salvation remains with them.

Cain would have been accepted by God if he had done well. Christians who take the sacraments however and whenever they determine that they should will be accepted by God if they do well. They are children of promise. But with very few exceptions, eight months into the Tribulation they will rebel against God by trying to enter His rest on the following day. And they will further compound their sinning by persecuting and slaying disciples represented by righteous Abel.

The American sense of justice would have the spiritual descendants of Cain, because their intentions are honorable, enter God's rest. Our American sense of justice would have this nation's prophets teaching that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom 10:13) without mentioning that the passage pertains to those Israelites who keep the commandments of God because those commandments are neither too hard to keep, nor far from them (*cf.* Rom 10:6–8; Deut 30:11–14).

Our American sense of justice comes from the spiritual king of Greece, whose great horn will be broken when the Tribulation begins. This great horn will be broken because it is this king's spiritual firstborn. And it is this firstborn king who doesn't believe that he will die, but will continue bodily on in the heaven realm. It is his unbelief that manifests itself in the theology of a bodily rapture.

* * *

October 2, 2004

Commentary — From the Margins *A Received Nature*

Every student of the Bible is familiar with the story of King Nebuchadnezzar living as a beast, or as an ox for seven years. The story is standard fodder for children's Bible-based coloring books. Its familiarity, though, tends to cause it to be dismissed when adults examine the epistles of Paul, and New Testament theology.

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that his wise men couldn't interpret, so he sent for Daniel whom he called Belteshazzar and whom he had made chief of the magicians. He told Daniel his vision, saying that a watcher of the Holy One had said, "Let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given him" (Dan 4:16). Daniel interpreted the dream, and gave the king counsel: "Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity" (v. 27). But a year later when bragging about having built mighty Babylon, a

voice from heaven pronounced the execution of the vision, confirming that "you shall be made to eat grass like an ox" (v. 32).

Nebuchadnezzar was made to eat grass like an ox by being given the mind of a beast. This story is prophetically significant for Nebuchadnezzar as king of Babylon typologically represents or is the shadow of Satan as the spiritual king of spiritual Babylon (Isa 14:4–20) when that old dragon is cast from heaven (Rev 12:9–10) and comes as the true antiChrist during the last half of seven years of tribulation (Rev 13:11); Satan will receive the mind of a man. But this story is additionally significant in understanding how Satan works as "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience" (Eph 2:2). For Satan influences how humans think at a fundamental level; hence, he influences what psychologists identify as human nature.

Human nature is generally believed to be a constant that can be modeled or crafted but has consistent behavior characteristics that can be and have been described through scientific observation. Holy Writ is not generally considered a reliable guide in understanding the workings of the human mind. Holy Writ is usually consigned to being historically significant moralist literature, a polite way of labeling the Bible as a collection of myths. For Holy Writ claims that the nature of beasts—of the great predators—will be changed when the Breath of God is breathed or poured out upon all flesh. As Nebuchadnezzar received the mind of a beast which changed his nature, thereby causing him to eat grass like an ox, the behavior patterns of beasts will change when the Holy Spirit is poured out. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together, and a little child shall lead them" (Isa 11:6) when the Lord's day arrives. The prophet goes on to say, "The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (vv. 7–9). Thus, even animals will have their natures positively affected by the Breath of God. Their presently observed behavioral patterns and characteristics will cease.

By observation, scientists have determined that the natures or instincts of predators are as fixed as is the nature of humankind. The American Declaration of Independence declares that there are self-evident truths based upon human nature. Philosophers describe the affairs of humanity based upon the understanding each has of human nature—and Melville in *Moby Dick* writes, concerning folio Leviathans, that the Right Whale's head is Locke and the Sperm Whale's head is Kant, that we need to "throw all these thunderheads overboard, and then you will float light and right" (chap 73). We, as Christians, need to reevaluate what philosophers and psychologists have observed and described as the fixed nature of humankind. We need to be less concerned about being correct perceivers and more concerned about what the narrative of Holy Writ reveals.

If God caused Nebuchadnezzar to eat grass like an ox and will cause lions to eat grass, then those aspects of nature that seem most natural have been received from God, have been placed inside living entities by their Creator. This includes humanity's natural inclination to reject God and His laws (Rom 8:7). This includes the willing acceptance of philosophies and scientific hypotheses that are labeled by the greater Christian Church as godless. This also includes individual self-identities. And herein lays the stickler: the gay man who insists that God created him gay, that he wouldn't wish being gay off on anyone, has justification in saying what he does. Except it wasn't God that made him gay—he received the nature of the prince of the power of the air; he received Satan's

perverted asexual nature. He was, indeed, given the nature he has, along with all of its associated attractions and desires.

The immediate objection will be the implied assumption in the preceding paragraph that if a received nature is good (a subjective term), it is from God—and if bad (an equally subjective term), then it is from Satan. That is a far too simplistic reading of the text.

Psychologists will look for childhood traumas that have shaped personal identities. Many times they will find these traumas. Domineering mothers, weak fathers, sudden deaths—these and many more factors sculpt a person into who he or she is. But the nature that is so sculpted isn't a nature that eats grass like an ox. Nor is it a nature that will do no harm, nor cause any hurt because of having knowledge of God. Rather, it is a nature consigned to disobedience (Rom 11:32), and with this consignment, individual natures become subject to traumas that determine how the prince of the power of the air's broadcasts are received. Therefore, the work that psychologists do has merit within the conscious mind, less merit when addressing the subconscious.

The Apostle Paul additionally writes, "For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin" (Rom 3:9). So human nature at a subconscious level is a nature of sin or lawlessness (1 John 3:4), a rebellious nature where none do good (Rom 3:12), a nature swift to shed blood (v. 15). And it is God who has consigned, as if our natural minds were merchandise, humankind to lawlessness. God has, in this age, placed human beings under the dominion of Satan through the old dragon, who deceives the whole world, being the prince of the power of the air. Satan reigns over, or reigned over the subconscious mental topography of all human beings—including you and me (Eph 2:3)—prior to the person being drawn from the world by God (John 6:44, 65).

The reality of Scripture is that God has the ability to change how human beings think and respond to stimuli (i.e., change human nature itself). He has, for an age, made those individuals who are His firstborn sons sin (or disobedient) so that he can have mercy on them (Rom 11:32). Jesus as the first of the firstfruits was made sin. The Cross, or death had no valid claim to Jesus' life, for Jesus was without sin. Thus, He had to be made sin through Him taking on the sins of others (of all humanity) in order for Him to die. The remainder of the firstfruits (i.e., the Body of Christ) were, however, made sin by consigning them to disobedience. God then, by writing His laws on hearts and minds, starts a war within each disciple. This war creates the condition the Apostle Paul found within himself when he wrote the seventh chapter of Romans.

The law of sin that once dwelt in the mind of every person alive was placed there by God when He allowed the old dragon to reign as the prince of the power of the air. The law of sin and death that continues to dwell in the flesh of every person alive came when Adam was driven from Eden before he could eat of the Tree of Life. Therefore, the abuse of the flesh that poses as liberation from the laws of God doesn't surprise God. When this age ends, so will that abuse. The minds and natures of every living being will be affected by knowledge of the Lord, a euphemistic expression for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28) when the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Most High and of His Christ (Rev 11:15 & Dan 7:9–14). The day of the Lord begins halfway through seven years of tribulation, begins with the typological birth of a spiritual Seth, the third son of the last Adam and the last Eve.

Human beings have been consigned to disobedience—that is, made sin—to justify every born-from-above disciple crucifying the Apostle Paul's old man, the person all of us were through unbelief. A real character change occurs in genuine disciples. As the circumcised nation that left Egyptian bondage was replaced man-for-man by their uncircumcised children, with the children being born and

maturing in the tents of their parents, the Apostle Paul's new man dwells in the same tabernacle of flesh as his old man. But this new man is an entirely different person than the crucified old man. This new man equates to the children that crossed the Jordan and entered the Promised Land.

Crucifixion doesn't kill instantly. Likewise, the human nature consigned to disobedience doesn't die instantly when a disciple has been born a second time. This old nature, which God made sin, hangs around as a father might most of the while that the Apostle Paul's new man develops. But the God and Father of this new man should be the Most High. When it isn't, the new man grows in the likeness of the old man. If this happens, the new man will experience the lake of fire when his judgment is revealed.

The early death or absence of a human father causes a son to model himself after other male (or female) role models. This is the domain of psychologists. The early death of the crucified old man should cause the new man to mature with Christ Jesus as his role model. A strong old man that, although imprisoned on the cross, lives on for decades influences the maturing new man. His disobedience into which he was consigned doesn't seem so bad to the new child of God. Such an old man needs his legs broken, which happens through trials and persecution. And because so many old men have figuratively lived too long, the hour of trial will come upon the whole world (Rev 3:10).

The Apostle Paul's new man has, through receipt of the Holy Spirit, a nature that will do no harm, a nature that if in a lion would cause the lion to eat grass. However, since this new man as a child lives in the same tabernacle as the crucified but still living old man, Grace covers the child's failures to do right, covers the many times when the child does do harm. But when this new man is liberated through empowerment by the Holy Spirit from the law of sin and death that dwells in his flesh, all old men will be dead. The new man will be able to walk blameless before God if that is his (or her) nature. If it isn't this spiritual new man's nature, then sin still lurks at this new man's door. This new creature is of Cain.

Once born from above, every disciple can possess the nature of Christ Jesus. Every disciple should acquire the nature of Christ. But this will not happen unless the crucified old man dies relatively quickly.

As with Oedipus, the son must kill the father that dwells in the same tabernacle of flesh—this is the riddle of Christianity; this is the bitterness of the scroll that tastes like honey in one's mouth. The son must break his crucified father's legs so that his nature will not become that of the old man.

Sons of disobedience are truly now doing what comes natural to each of them. Some of them, though, live apparently moral lives. Many of them do good works. The old men of these sons of disobedience will not, when crucified, greatly hinder the maturing of the new creatures that will be born through receipt of the Holy Spirit. So there is a tangible benefit in doing what is right for even sons of disobedience that have been made sin by God.

* * *

October 5, 2004

Commentary — From the Margins *The Texture of Scripture*

When the heavens opened and the prophet Ezekiel saw visions of God, he saw four living creatures, each with a wheel on the earth beside the creatures (Ezek 1:15)—and the appearance of each wheel and their construction was as "a wheel within a wheel" (v. 16).

Their construction were as gyroscopes used for navigation. And the texture of Scripture is as wheels within wheels, or as shadows in a hall of mirrors. It is this texture of Scripture that navigates disciples into the promised land of Christ's rest.

Texture (as opposed to text, both terms used in their literary sense) purports that the meaning of a particular text or narrative isn't necessarily contained within the narrative, but resides within the context in which the narrative is received. Texture recognizes that meaning is assigned to words and to passages of words, that the literal or denotative meanings usually assigned to the words are not the intended assignments of meaning. In this, reading texture differs from reading symbolism that has been placed within the narrative. Texture is not contained within the narrative; it isn't in the text. It is always in how the text is received, and it is conveyed through the use of certain literary conventions.

In Native American narratives, the primary device used to convey to the intended audience that meaning resides in the texture of the story is the storyteller's use of archaic language. The unintended auditors (i.e., auditors being the audience for the text) hear the usually simplistic story, assign a child-like meaning to the story, then either dismiss the story or collect it to show the simplicity of the culture. The unintended auditor simply doesn't understand the story even though this person understands the meaning of each word; whereas the intended auditor recognizes that in a story about Raven bringing the Sun then gathering seaweed every day instead of hunting seals that a person cannot rest on his or her past deeds but must work every day. No deed that the person has done in the past exceeds that of Raven bringing the Sun. And if Raven bringing the Sun didn't secure his place within his society, then the person's past deeds will not secure that person's place within his or her society. Texture, therefore, serves to separate the narrative's audience into intended and unintended.

Jesus said that the "sheep hear his voice" (John 10:3, also v. 16). His disciples are His intended audience. The hirelings—those individuals who have been tending His flock—are not His audience. They do not hear His voice. They have never heard His voice even though they have been both shepherding and preying upon His flock.

The *Eureka!-now-I-have-it* biblical pundits (those who sincerely believe they understand what they do not) that grasp a concept or two see one wheel of many wheels within a wheel; they see one shadow darkly in a hall of mirrors; they recognize that seaweed is not good food. They then proceed to build spiritual houses for themselves based upon the wheel or shadow they identify as the meaning of Scripture, of the Gospel, of prophecy. The disciples born in their spiritual house usually remain loyal to the pundits throughout their childhood. These disciples are then financially hamstrung and spiritually starved; for inevitably, the pundits teach that the only road to salvation runs through the houses that they have built.

We all see darkly, or see shadows. No human being can bodily cross dimensions and enter the third heaven. Until a disciple receives a glorified or incorruptible body, entrance can only be made by vision.

But Jesus told His disciples that knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven had been given to them (Matt 13:11), that to the person who has knowledge more will be given, but to the one who has not even what the person has will be taken from the person (v. 12). Jesus fulfilled what the prophet Isaiah said about speaking in parables to utter what had been hidden since the foundation of the world (vv. 34–35). Thus, through parables Jesus revealed to His intended audience what had been hidden from the beginning, while His unintended audience heard interesting but simplistic stories.

Those things that have been hidden from humanity since the foundation of the world have been revealed in the texture of Scripture, for Jesus spoke the words of the Father.

He didn't speak His own words. And the hidden things that He revealed aren't in the text, but are in the context in which the text is received.

Anyone can read the parable about the wheat and the tares (or weeds), and can understand that, figuratively, seaweed isn't good food, that genuine disciples grow and mature with false disciples until the judgment when the genuine disciples receive immortality and the false disciples are cast into the lake of fire. The person who has raised wheat will additionally understand that the tares or weeds grow faster than the wheat, that when overlooking the field the tares look like the planted crop and the wheat appears as weeds. But the texture of the parable still alludes either of these auditors. The texture is in the typology. Both the Psalmist and the writer of Hebrews link the geographical Promised Land to God's rest (Num 14:30; Ps 95:10–11 & Heb 3:19). The hill country of Judea—the land promised to the descendants of the patriarch Abraham through Isaac and Jacob—becomes both the glorified Jesus sitting down at the right hand of the Father, and Christ Jesus' millennium-long reign over humanity, and the weekly Sabbath. This hill country received an early and a latter rain. The crops of this land weren't flood irrigated as crops in Egypt were (Deut 11:10). The crops were not those of a vegetable garden, but grains, oil and wine (v. 14). And the hill country produced two grain harvests: the early barley harvest and the latter wheat harvest, each harvest dependent upon its corresponding rain.

The parable of the tares and the wheat, now, must be placed in context with the hill country of Judea producing the twin harvests of God, and being the twin rests of God for each harvest. The rest of God occurs both individually to disciples and collectively to the Body of Christ. Within the spiritual life of each disciple is the history of the Body, beginning when the man Jesus of Nazareth had the Breath [*Pneuma*] of the Father descend upon Him as a dove (Matt 3:16) to when He was crucified, laid in the heart of the earth, then was resurrected and glorified—beginning when the glorified Jesus breathed on ten of His disciples (John 20:22) to when He reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords after seven years of tribulation. These years of tribulation, now, correspond to when Jesus laid in the heart of the earth, with the first three and a half years of the Tribulation being a period of death, a period of giving the little ones into the hand of the man of perdition (Dan 7:25 & 2 Thess 2:3–12), the period when the fourth horseman of the Apocalypse (i.e., Death) rides through humanity to kill a fourth of those alive. Individually, for disciples who have lived and died before the Tribulation begins, the period that Jesus laid in the tomb prior to His resurrection and glorification represent the period when these disciples lay in the grave and await resurrection and glorification. So one type or shadow produces multiple spiritual realities.

The tares can be read—since the tares probably reference *darnel*, a wheat-like weed—as those disciples who rebel against God because they didn't love righteousness enough to walk uprightly before Him either during the Tribulation or during their lifetimes if they lived and died earlier. They look like the intended crop, but they were planted by an enemy. And the texture of Scripture has these tares growing both before Christ returns as well as during His millennial reign when the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon all flesh, the logic for why Satan is released for a short while (another three and a half years — from typology) after the thousand years (Rev 20:7–10). The angels do the separating of who is for God and who is opposed to God (Rev 14:14–20). Loyal angels do this separating at the beginning of Christ's rest; disloyal angels do this separating after a thousand years. And the juxtaposition of who separates wheat from tares extends to the marking of who is for God during the first half of the Tribulation with who is for the antiChrist in the second half of the Tribulation; i.e., observance of the seventh day Sabbath marks who is for God during the first half (marks these individuals for death from the man of perdition and the fourth horseman), while taking the mark of the beast

(*chi xi stigma*) marks for the second death in the lake of fire those who are for the antiChrist.

The Breath of God corresponds to rain in Judea. In Hebrew, however, the same word can mean rain in due season as well as a teacher of righteousness. Both the barley harvest and the latter wheat harvest, then, are dependant upon teachers of righteousness that cause both tares and good seed to grow, are dependant upon rain that falls in due season upon the just and the unjust.

Jesus, in the parable of the tares, uses the narrative to quickly identify Satan as the deceiver of those disciples who do not love righteousness enough to practice walking blameless before Him under the cover of Grace, of those disciples who will come under the great delusion sent by God upon them, of those disciples who will join with Satan after a thousand years of Christ's reign over humanity. We now can see ourselves in this field of wheat and tares. Would we, after living a thousand years under the reign of Christ, join with Satan to rebel against God?

No, you say.

Well, will you now practice walking blameless before God? Of course, you say.

But if you are not today striving to live within the laws of God, all of them, including the Sabbath commandment, are you really practicing walking blameless—or are you like the person during the Millennium who will live year after year immersed in the Holy Spirit before joining with Satan by deciding to determine for him or herself what is right and wrong when Satan is loosed to again deceive humanity? Your determination today of whether you will strive to live within the laws of God truly marks you, just as assuredly as accepting the tattoo of the Cross will mark you during the second half of the Tribulation.

What is not in the narrative of the parable of the tares but in the texture is that each disciple chooses whether to be a tare or a stalk of wheat, chooses whether to be of the Adversary or of God. The choice made by the early barley harvest will be revealed when Christ returns (1 Co 4:5). The Spirit of God rains on the just and the unjust. You will grow as one or the other. About that, you don't have a choice.

Abraham as the father of the faithful "obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise" (Heb 11:8–9). Today, the Apostle Paul's new man dwells in a tent of flesh in a land of promise; he dwells as in a foreign land. He dwells in spiritual Judea. The wild olive branches grafted onto the root of righteousness will, by faith, live as Judeans, producing the fruit of the Promised Land: righteousness. They will no longer produce their natural fruit—if they continue to do so, they will be gathered and burned in the lake of fire. They will be tares. They will have chosen their fate.

Jacob wrestled with God when he returned to the land of promise. He grappled with God—and he prevailed not by defeating God, but by struggling and being defeated. He won by losing. He didn't quit. He held on, he fought on, he wouldn't let go. But in the end, he was no match for God. He knew this. He knew that God could have ended the match at anytime. And it is the same for each of us. We wrestle with God when we return to spiritual Judea after years of exile.

When called by God, my spiritual ancestors, like the patriarch Abraham did physically, moved from where they dwelt mentally as sons of disobedience to the land of promise where they lived as spiritual Judeans. The Apostle Paul tells us that this is how Peter taught Gentile converts to live (Gal 2:14 — the passage is usually poorly translated into English). But my immediate ancestors left Judea during the spiritual drought of a spiritual Ahab and Jezebel. They returned to the groves of wild olives from which scions had been taken for grafting onto the root of righteousness; they returned to living as

Gentiles, not Judeans. So when I, like other disciples consigned to disobedience, was grafted onto righteousness, I had to wrestle with God. And I had to lose.

If I didn't lose, I would be a tare.

* * *

October 6, 2004

Commentary — From the Margins *"Do not harm the oil and wine!"*

When Hananiah the false prophet pronounced, in the name of God, that the yoke of Babylon would be broken within two years from off Jerusalem's neck, the prophet Jeremiah told Hananiah and those assembled together, "The prophets who preceded you and me from ancient times prophesied war, famine, and pestilence against many countries and great kingdoms. As for the prophet who prophesies peace, when the word of that prophet comes to pass, then it will be known that the Lord has truly sent the prophet" (Jer 28:8–9).

Prophets prophesy war, famine, and pestilence; they speak to warn peoples to repent of wrong doing. Good news comes from each person having love for his or her neighbor—with the principle exception that during a future period of worldwide death, when it appears that humanity might not survive, Jesus of Nazareth prophesied that all who endure to the end shall be saved (Matt 24:13). This is the only good news of that period of tribulation, a period that for the Body of Christ corresponds to the three days and nights that Jesus was in the grave. During this period, the greater Christian Church as the last Eve will give birth to many sons of God. But spiritual birth isn't directly analogous with human birth. Rather, Jesus' baptism and receipt of the Breath of God (Matt 3:16); His earthly ministry, physical death, resurrection and glorification—all together establish the pattern for spiritual birth, maturation, metamorphosis (used figuratively), and emergence as glorified beings. The *Logos* as *Theos* (John 1:1-3) created all things physical: the last aspect of this physical creation in which humanity finds itself was establishing the path or model for crossing dimensions. Once the *Logos* created this path, He sat down at the right hand of the Father to rest.

The above correspondences need emphasized: Jesus' baptism and receipt of the Breath of God is birth-from-above in the same manner as the first Adam was born when he received the breath of life when *Elohim* (singular in usage) breathed into his nostrils (Gen 2:7). John the Baptist didn't want to baptize Jesus, for his baptism was for the repentance of sin and Jesus was without sin. But Jesus insisted, saying, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt 3:15). Jesus didn't need to be baptized, but was baptized to fulfill all righteousness. He was establishing or creating the path into the heavenly realm. That path is the fulfillment of all righteousness.

The order of baptism then receipt of the Holy Spirit changed when wild olive branches were grafted onto the root of righteousness: Cornelius and his household received the Holy Spirit, then were baptized. Salvation was no longer limited to a physical nation of natural born Israelites and proselytes. A spiritual nation of Israel was being created by the Father drawing and Christ calling sons of disobedience out of a spiritual Babylon into which all humanity had been consigned when sin and death entered the world through the first Adam. Just as Ezra left Babylon and returned to the Land Beyond the River to rebuild the temple of God, disciples are to leave a spiritual

Babylon and mentally relocate themselves in Judea, living as Judeans, for they are today the temple[s] of God.

Disciples don't know to leave Babylon until after they receive the Holy Spirit. Until then, they are mentally content being part of the world. Their thoughts, their logic is of this world. For them, thoughts of what exists beyond those things that can be measured and seen with the human eye are illogical, even nonsensical. They are no more interested in God than a dog is in quadratic equations. They are spiritually as beasts are physically—and they cannot help themselves, nor change their situation until God gives them the Holy Spirit. Therefore, because the Body of Christ is not of this world, but remains in this world, sons of disobedience must receive a whiff of the Breath of God before they will leave this world and accept spiritual judgment upon themselves, what baptism symbolizes (the death by crucifixion of the Apostle Paul's old man). And the fellowships that continue to teach dogma having baptism preceding receipt of the Holy Spirit lack spiritual understanding; these fellowships are in need of being taught sound doctrine. (Their objections to sound doctrine are as so many dogs barking.)

Spiritual birth occurs when the Apostle Paul's new man is born within the tabernacle of the crucified old man—but spiritual birth doesn't produce a glorified butterfly, but rather, a worm that will not die. If the second death in the lake of fire occurs, this death happens upon resurrection when the disciple's judgment is revealed (1 Co 4:5). And the concept of a second death requires a second birth and life.

But so far, the subject under discussion is an individual's spiritual birth. The texture of Scripture has a last Eve (just as Jesus is the last Adam — 1 Co 15:45) being created when the glorified Jesus breathed on ten of His disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). The Church is this last Eve—and as a foreshadow of what will happen when this last Eve brings many sons to glory, the 120 were empowered by the Holy Spirit on that day of Pentecost following Jesus' Ascension and acceptance by the Father. As a woman filled by her husband, the Church that day gave birth to three thousand sons. This same last Eve, during the Tribulation (her hard labor pains of spiritual childbirth) will deliver three spiritual sons: Cain, Abel and Seth. These three are the grain harvest of the spiritual land of promise, of Judea. And in a play of shadows, they are all the early barley harvest of firstfruits—and they are both the early barley harvest and the latter wheat harvest. They are not, however, the crushed, pressed and processed fruit of the wild olive branches that were grafted onto the root of righteousness. They are not the fruit of the pruned natural vine.

Textual texture is more easily grasped by oral cultures than by inscribed cultures. Storytellers give verbal clues about the depth (i.e., layering) of a narrative. These clues are not in the text of the narrative but in its presentation. They are revealed in hearing the voice of the person relating the narrative. And the texture of Scripture is revealed in hearing the voice of Christ Jesus.

The four horsemen of the Apocalypse emerge when the seven years of the last Eve's hard labor pains begin. The third of these horsemen rides a black horse and holds a pair of scales (balances) in his hand. The appearance of this horse and rider is how this spiritual entity functions in the plan of God, just as the glorified Jesus appears in the narrative as an actual lamb with seven eyes—He functions as the sacrificed Lamb of God, and His seven spirits function as His eyes. So this horseman doesn't represent famine as has been traditionally taught by Sabbath-keeping fellowships. Rather, this third horseman makes merchandise, as in the buying and selling of commodities, of both grain harvests of spiritual Judea. This third horseman is the four-headed leopard of Daniel chapter 7, and the spiritual king of the South of Daniel chapter eleven; this third horseman represents sin. And it is sin that makes merchandise of newly born-from-above disciples during the Tribulation. Disciples who have been figuratively processed

before the last Eve's hard labor begins are not harmed by sin: they cover their sins through taking the Passover sacraments of Bread and the Cup.

However, even though sin cannot harm, cannot make merchandise of the oil and the wine, these disciples that are the processed fruit of the wild olive grafts and of the pruned vine remain within the correspondence that fulfills all righteousness. They collectively "disciple" those who are born as Cain and Abel. Individually, they join themselves to either Cain or Abel. They cannot not join, for they become the teachers of both spiritual sons of the last Eve that they comprise.

The separation of the greater Church into Cain and Abel has already begun even though the Tribulation hasn't begun—the separation has to begin early so that all of the last Eve's seed are not of Cain. Likewise, a remnant of spiritual Abel (i.e., of disciples who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus — Rev 12:17) will not die, but will function as a spiritual Joshua and a spiritual Caleb to lead Israel across the Jordan and into a spiritual promised land, into God's rest; will function as the realities of the seven pairs of clean animals and single pair of unclean animals that entered the Ark in the days of Noah.

Disciples, today, know whether they are of Cain or of Abel if they examine themselves. Those disciples who will sue a brother, who will persecute a brother, who will defraud a brother are of Cain. They have already marked themselves for the second death. Other human beings don't see this mark, but angels do. And as the mark God placed on Cain kept those who found Cain from attacking him, likewise the mark placed on a spiritual Cain identifies the person as a fugitive under God's protection, a fugitive with whom God will deal, not anyone else. Collectively, God deals with Cain by pouring out the seven bowls of wrath on all those who have taken the mark of the beast. Individually, God deals with a Cain through the Body delivering "the man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord" (1 Co 5:5). Collectively, the birth of Cain occurs during the Tribulation. Individually, the birth of Cain occurs when a disciple determines that he is not his brother's keeper.

The question emerges, how is a disciple to deal with a marked brother? Concerning the question of idleness, of not supporting oneself through the work of his or her hands, the Apostle Paul writes, "If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother" (2 Thess 3:14–15). The problem now becomes, within the fractured (through denominationalism) Body of Christ, of who marks whom. This problem already existed when the Apostle John wrote his third epistle: Diotrephes, who had made himself first (i.e., was a church leader), slandered John and was putting out of the Body genuine disciples (3 John vv. 9–10). Paul had to write an Aristotelian argument to the Galatians because his authority in that fellowship wasn't sufficient to command brethren there to knock off the nonsense about physical circumcision; the authority of whomever had come from Jerusalem was as great or greater than his. Thus, today, having nothing to do with a brother is ineffectual because of the diversified nature of the Body—the brother merely joins with other like-minded brethren to begin a new work of serving Christ. This brother can still be recognized because he or she will not work, but if again marked, the cycle begins once more. And contrarily, if the brother repents and changes and begins to support him or herself, the damage done by marking cannot be repealed. Who is the universally recognized authority that can restore the brother? So marking is only effective in the spiritual realm, and only effective when done by God. An individual fellowship can remove a brother, but cannot take the Holy Spirit from the person. That remains the prerogative of God alone.

Again, the layering of Scriptural texture: within every individual disciple is the entirety of the plan of God. Within the collective fellowships of disciples that form the

Church is the entirety of the plan of God. Within the recorded history of humanity, beginning with the creation of the first Adam, is the entirety of the plan of God. The man Israel in prevailing with God is, ultimately, one holy nation, the tithe of humanity that has been gathered into the storehouse of God.

The model for spiritual birth has, within the splintered churches of God, been that of human birth, with actual birth occurring when disciples are glorified. This model has disciples being begotten rather than born when disciples receive the Holy Spirit. These disciples then grow as fetuses in the womb of the last Eve, the Church. They groan, for they know not how to speak (Rom 8:23), as they await childbirth. And then when born, they emerge as baby gods. They do not emerge as the glorified Christ Jesus is. They do not emerge as the fully developed younger brothers of the glorified Jesus. They do not emerge "conformed to the image of [the Father's] Son" (v. 29). Thus, while this model has limited merit, it represents a poor understanding of spiritual birth.

The path into the heavenly realm that begins with Jesus fulfilling all righteousness corresponds better to the development of butterflies than to the conception, development and birth of human beings, who have most of their physical and mental development ahead of them when born, who enter the world of light utterly helpless and in need of mothering. With butterflies, growth occurs during the pupae stage. This physical growth corresponds to the development of the Apostle Paul's new man within the tabernacle of the old man, making the tabernacle of flesh the mother of the individual disciple just as the Church is the mother of the collective Body. Salvation of the woman comes through childbirth. Salvation of the disciple's tabernacle of flesh is also through childbirth. Not that flesh and blood enters the heavenly realm. Rather, the child corresponds to the woman's salvation, to the Church's salvation.

With butterflies, when the pupae has grown to maturity, the pupae spins a cocoon around itself and dies, only to emerge as a fully developed butterfly. Within individual disciples, the new creature grows to maturity, then enters a cocoon-like state when its tabernacle of flesh dies—these are souls under the altar (Rev 6:9–11)—only to emerge when resurrected and glorified as a fully grown son of God, a younger brother to Christ Jesus. As there is life within death in the cocoon, so too is there life within death for those who have received spiritual birth. What occurs within this cocoon of timelessness isn't well understood. Few scriptural passages pertain to the subject other than the spirit return to God at death. So the metamorphosis of resurrection and glorification remains as mysterious as what occurred between when Jesus was raised from the dead after three days and three nights, and when He ascended to the Father (there is an unaccounted-for half day). Three and a half days pass between when Jesus was crucified/sacrificed and when He was glorified. Three and a half years will pass between when the last Eve gives birth to Cain and Abel, and when she gives birth to Seth through the Holy Spirit being poured out upon all flesh. These three and a half years cover the ministry of the two witnesses, whose deaths and resurrections testify to the defeat of Death, the fourth horseman of the Apocalypse. By two or three witnesses a thing is established. The man Jesus of Nazareth is the first witness that Death has been defeated. But a thing isn't established by one witness. Disciples accept the fact that Death has been defeated by faith. However, when the two witnesses are resurrected that faith becomes the evidence of a thing seen.

The fourth beast of Daniel chapter seven is the spiritual king of the North and functions in the plan of God as Death, the fourth horseman. He is taken when the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Most High and of His Christ (*cf.* Dan 7:9–14; Rev 11:15–19). His body is given over to be burned. It is the tattoo of him (i.e., his body) that becomes the mark of the beast.

Therefore, the first three and a half years of the Tribulation corresponds to the time Jesus spent in the grave awaiting Ascension. Individually, these years and days equate to the time an individual disciple spends in the grave awaiting his or her change. And the texture of Scripture allows more to be surmised about both periods. Cain kills Abel. That righteous son of God through Adam didn't die accidentally, but was murdered. Disciples born to the last Eve during that time; disciples who practice righteousness can expect to be killed. But if they are unwilling to lose their lives for Christ, they are not worthy of Him (Matt 10:39). Likewise, those disciples who try to save their lives will lose them spiritually (2 Thess chap 2). So Cain dies spiritually while Abel dies physically. Thus, for individual disciples, the person who tries to save his or her physical life is as the first lawbreaker to speak at Calvary. The person who willingly crucified his or her former self will fulfill all righteousness and will gain salvation even though the flesh dies, or is dead.

Both of the last Eve's sons, spiritually born-from-above at the beginning of the Tribulation, die. One physically. One spiritually. But this last Eve's salvation is in childbirth—and she bears a third son that corresponds to Christ's Ascension and glorification. Therefore, the good news that must be proclaimed to all the world as a witness to all nations before the end comes is that all who endure to the end shall be saved (Matt 24:13–14 & 10:22). (We now see in the tenth chapter of Matthew what the oil and the wine will do during the first three and a half years of the Tribulation. They are as Jesus' disciples were during His earthly ministry.) All who endure to the end are as Jesus was: they will be accepted by God; they will be saved. Their maturation process will occur during the last three and a half years of seven years of tribulation—this is the period through which they must endure in faith. Then they will be changed in the twinkling of an eye. They will be glorified. They will go directly from pupae to butterfly without spending time in a cocoon stage.

Disciples today are being processed and refined, with the pressing of oil from olives and crushing grapes for wine being the correspondences. Impurities are being strained away. Even wild olives yield oil although not as much as a chosen variety. Even wild grapes produce wine although that wine will be foxy. Therefore, the disciple who resists refining will be rejected with the pulp, and will be cast away. Disciples must endure the refining process; thus, they must endure to the end. And the collective has again been revealed through the individual, and vice versa, such is the texture of Scripture.

All of the above pertains to the harvest of firstfruits, or the early barley harvest of spiritual Judea. But the above also pertains to the great White Throne Judgment, when the wheat harvest, which corresponds to that portion of the early harvest represented by the birth of the spiritual Seth, emerges from death without previously receiving spiritual life through the Holy Spirit. This latter wheat harvest will be accepted as the second thief at Calvary was—or rejected as the first thief was. And this model of spiritual birth begins with Jesus' baptism representing the literal death of the old man. This model has no extended period of ministry beyond what the second thief said to the first, but quickly proceeds to a figurative rejection of physical life and glorification (this rejection of physical corresponding to the time Jesus spent in the grave). Or a resurrected individual will lay claim to his or her physical life and reject spiritual life; hence, the individual will experience the second death.

Everyone in the great White Throne Judgment—contrary to what many Evangelical teachers of Israel claim—will be accepted by God, will be saved if the person will reject his or her physical life. And this great White Throne Judgment is represent by the last or eighth day of Tabernacles, when humanity will no longer dwell in fleshly tents but will be like the angels, only higher in order, for they will be the sons of the Most High, the younger brethren of the firstborn Son of God. They are the great wheat harvest of spiritual Judea.

Because sin cannot harm the oil and the wine doesn't mean that these disciples will be physically protected in a place of safety. Nor does it mean that these disciples will be bodily raptured to heaven. It means that collectively, these disciples have overcome sin through the blood of the Lamb.

* * *

October 12, 2004

Commentary — From the Margins *Created for Glory*

The prophet Isaiah writes, "'You are my witnesses,' declares the Lord, 'and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he'" (43:10 — English Standard Version, used throughout) who has declared what will be from the beginning, who has set his hand to recover "everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made" (v. 7).

The holy day season has concluded for another year—these seasonal harvest celebrations reveal the plan God set in place to recover everyone called by His name, whom He created for His glory. Since Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden, all of humanity has been consigned to sin (Rom 11:32), the wages of which is death, so that God could have mercy on those called by His name. He ransomed his firstborn son (Ex 4:22) by giving the lives of the firstborn of Egypt (Isa 43:3). But this firstborn son did not enter His rest because of his unbelief (Heb 3:19; Ps 95:10–11). Rather, it was the uncircumcised children of this firstborn son who crossed the Jordan and entered the land of promise on the day when the paschal lamb was selected and penned, pending sacrifice (Josh 4:19). The children of the nation that left Egyptian bondage were circumcised before Passover (Josh 5:2–10), and they were sacrificed under the law as the paschal offering for the sins of humanity. They were figuratively the children of bondage, children of the earthly Jerusalem (Gal 4:21–31). They had become as their ancestors were who had left Egyptian bondage: because of their unbelief, they were replaced by their uncircumcised, born-from-above children.

But spiritual birth is unlike physical birth. It is analogous to the birth of a butterfly. A son of the first Adam is as the egg; this son of the first Adam is a spiritual corpse awaiting the Breath of God in the same way that Adam was created as a corpse awaiting the breath of life, breathed into his nostrils by Elohim (Gen 2:7). Jesus as the second Adam, in fulfilling all righteousness (Matt 3:15), came as a son of the first Adam (1 John 4:2) and received the Breath of the Father (Matt 3:16), thereby establishing the model for spiritual birth. And once born-from-above through receiving the Holy Spirit, the child of God spiritually grows as a worm that will not die—the second death can come only when the child's judgment is revealed upon Christ's return (1 Co 4:5). But this child of God resides in a tabernacle of flesh, which will die, analogous to the worm spinning a cocoon in which it dies but lives. Then upon Christ's return, the book of life opens as a cocoon does, and the new creature emerges, its change as spectacular as that of a worm into a butterfly.

The copies of heavenly things were necessarily purified by the blood of calves and goats, but the heavenly things by the better sacrifice of the Son of Man (Heb 9:23). The copies of heavenly things includes the entirety of humankind, for God (*Elohim*, plural usage) said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness" (Gen 1:26). Therefore, this copy of a heavenly thing must also be purified by blood—and God gave the life of His firstborn Son as the ransom for humankind. However, since spiritual birth is not a

simple process, not a manner of entering the womb a second time (John 3:5–8), but birth both by water (of the womb) and by spirit, God also gave the life of his firstborn son after the flesh as the ransom for humankind.

But the Israel for which the lives of peoples (i.e., the lives of the firstborn of Egypt) served as the nation's ransom (Isa 43:3–4) did not enter the Promised Land because of unbelief, but died in the Wilderness of Sin. Likewise, their descendants did not receive spiritual birth because of their unbelief even though this birth was offered to them under the second covenant mediated by Moses (Deut chaps 29–31); none of them kept the law (John 7:19). So God made another people (for whom no physical ransom had been paid) his holy nation, but a holy nation in bondage to the law of sin and death that dwelt in the members of the nation (Rom 7:25). And just as fleshly Israel was ransomed with the lives of peoples, spiritual Israel will be ransomed with the lives of peoples when this nation is liberated from bondage.

The logic for a second Passover slaughter of firstborns not covered by the blood of paschal Lamb of God is in the two-part nature of spiritual birth. Jesus will not be crucified a second time. He died once to redeem spiritual Israel, or to pay the ransom price for spiritual birth—to reconcile humankind to God so that the worm that will not die could be born-from-above. But an additional ransom must be paid before the worm is liberated from bondage to the law of sin and death, that bondage the equivalent of bondage to Pharaoh in Egypt. This ransom will be the death of all firstborns of spiritual Babylon not covered by the blood of the Lamb. This includes the firstborn son—the single great horn—of the angelic spiritual king of Greece to whom dominion over human beings was given (Dan 2:39 & 8:8, 21 & 10:20).

The ransom price for the liberation of spiritual Israel will be the death of all uncovered firstborns in spiritual Babylon, just as the ransom price for the liberation of fleshy Israel from bondage to Pharaoh was the death of all firstborns in Egypt. And Israel's liberation is in the near future, not centuries or even decades away. The payment of this ransom will usher in the seven years of tribulation that are the hard labor pains of the last Eve bringing many sons of God to glory.

We are witnesses who testify in advance to God's intention to recover everyone called by His name. The evidence of our election to deliver the endtime gospel of patient endurance comes from our announcing of the ransom that will be paid when Israel is liberated, when the last Eve gives birth to first a spiritual Cain, then to a spiritual Abel. False witnesses will declare that the payment of this ransom is the sixth trumpet plague, but they will be three years off in their reckoning. Indeed, there will be a second slaughter of a third of humanity before Christ returns. This slaughter will be the ransom for when the last Eve gives birth to a spiritual Seth, who only has to endure to the end to be saved (Matt 24:13). Therefore, everyone who waits and arrives at the 1335 days will be blessed (Dan 12:12) although the thirty day period between 1290 and 1260 will try the patience of the saints. These are the days that if not cut short would leave no human being alive (Matt 24:22).

The months between now and the Passover will slip by all too quickly. Disciples need to plan now to eat the Bread and drink from the Cup as Jesus established the example. They cover their sins through taking these Passover sacraments, not by drinking from Babylon's cup whenever and however they wish.

* * *

October 21, 2004

Commentary — From the Margins

The Importance of Ministry

The Apostle Paul writes,

And he [Jesus] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. (Eph 4:11–14)

Thus, the purpose of the ministry in every Christian denomination and in every fellowship is, first, to equip the saints for the work of ministry. It isn't first to promote civil good or to advocate for social justice. It isn't first to preach Christ to Muslims or to Buddhists. It isn't first to build television networks or cathedrals. It isn't first to heal the sick or to cast out demons. It is to bring disciples to spiritual maturity so that these disciples can in turn bring additional disciples to maturity who will bring additional disciples to maturity. Disciples come when God the Father draws (John 6:44, 65), and Christ Jesus calls (John 15:16, 19) them from the world. A person doesn't choose God, or choose to give his or her heart to the Lord unless God has first drawn the person. Decision theology is bad doctrine. And more resources have been squandered trying to cajole the reluctant to accept Christ as their personal savior than has been spent equipping born-from-above disciples for doing the work of ministry.

Although proving how much has been spent either cajoling or equipping is impossible, the Apostle Paul said the evidence that the saints at Corinth remained babes, subject to being blown about by every wind of doctrine, was their jealousy and strife and behavior in human ways (1 Co 3:2–3). The evidence of behaving in human ways was one saying the person was of Paul while another said the person was of Apollos (v. 4). Today, one says he is a Methodist, while another says he is a Baptist, and both believe that their Mormon neighbors are not of Christ. So the same condition presently exists in the greater Christian Church as existed at Corinth. And this condition is especially evident among the slivers of the splintered church of God, these slivers being absolutely convinced that only they possess the truth of God as taught by Herbert Armstrong.

Throughout the world jealousy and strife within the greater Church exists, with Protestants and Catholics still fighting the battles that began the Reformation. James writes that wherever "jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice" (Jas 3:16), that jealousy and selfish ambition is earthly, unscriptural and demonic (v. 15). And this global condition of strife between Christians will not change when the Tribulation begins. Instead, war between Christians will intensify. Whereas much has been written about Islamic fundamentalism wanting to return the world to the 7th-Century, the Tribulation will return Christianity to the 4th-Century, with Arian Christians representing the school of Ephesus and the demonic king of the North fighting against and eventually prevailing over Trinitarian Christians representing the school at Alexandria and the king of the South. This global war has already begun although the shooting won't commence until the false prophet appears. The last time Arian Christianity prevailed over Trinitarian Christianity was when the Vandals sacked Rome. The next time will be when food is levered into discipleship. And much of Evangelical Christianity has conceded victory to the Arians by teaching a doctrine of bodily Rapture to heaven, thereby leaving their saints to begin seven years of extreme turmoil with no preparation and few survival skills. These saints are neither equipped for ministry, nor equipped to provide for themselves. And it is here where exception must be taken with the heavy expenditures of resources by a few ministries that appear more

interested in building themselves both physical and spiritual houses where they might dwell securely on the tithes and offerings of spiritual children than in locally equipping the saints for ministry. Those ministries, whether large or small, that foreground strife through disputing single words or by disputing passages of words that form doctrines need to stop immediately. Those employed within these ministries need to seek gainful work, thereby earning their livings with their hands after the example set by the Apostle Paul who labored night and day to support himself and the people with him.

The nature of Christianity from its conception has been strife over words. The Apostle Paul used words to the Galatians to combat the circumcision faction that came from Jerusalem. I am using words to criticize television ministries whose sincere desire is to preach Christ to the world without first equipping disciples for personal evangelism. Thus, the greater Church has been imprisoned by strife through words and over words from the 1st-Century, for the kingdom of God is not of this world but words and flesh are. So are swords and bullets, rice and beans. And the next war will be fought with lentils and potatoes—disciples who will trade their birthright to salvation for a bowl of lentils will be as Esau was.

Isaac was the son of promise that represents the Jerusalem from above (Gal 4:21–31), but Isaac has twins sons of promise. The older was rejected before birth, but the younger accepted. When in the womb with no sin imputed to either, God knew that the older would not value his inheritance enough to die for it, and that the younger, although deceitful from the beginning, would prevail with God when the two of them wrestled. God knew that the younger would not quit on Him, but would fight even when the odds were against Him winning.

Once born from above, salvation is a matter of simply hearing the words of Jesus and believing the One who sent Him (John 5:24) by applying those words, by living by those words. Jesus was a Judean. He lived as a Judean. He taught as a teacher of Judea. His disciples were Judeans—not Pharisees, who had the law but didn't keep it (John 7:19). And if disciples today are to hear His words, disciples will also live as Judeans, which will fulfill all righteousness. Disciples are to mentally relocate themselves from wherever they were when chosen through undertaking a journey of faith to the landscape of Judea, the template of thoughts characteristic of Jesus, of John, of James, of Peter, of Paul.

The Bible isn't to be studied line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little. To study Scripture through a lattice-work of precepts will inevitably cause the person to stumble, fall and be snared by a noose of words (Isa 28:13) that generates strife and feeds ambitions. A ministry equips saints for ministry by teaching saints to live as mental Judeans. These saints will, then, teach other saints to live as Judeans, who have the law of God written on their hearts and in their minds, who value their lives as spiritual Judeans more than their physical lives.

Therefore, because greater Christianity has not spent as many resources on equipping the saints as it has spent on cajoling the reluctant to accept salvation—resources that have been mostly squandered—the Church doesn't teach disciples to live as Jesus did, but to live as Greeks disputing words in vain philosophical wrangling that will again lead to a real shooting war.

* * *

October 31, 2004

Commentary — From the Margins *The Veneer of Civilization*

In an after-hours conversation at University of Alaska Fairbanks' Midnight Sun Writer Conference in 1981, Robert Stone, author of *Dog Soldiers* and former Vietnam War correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian*, said he was willing to let multinational corporations attempt to govern if they could maintain social stability. Liberal graduate students for whom the multinationals were the antithesis of fairness and social progress immediately took him to task. But Stone explained his reasoning by saying that the veneer of civilization was exceedingly thin, that savagery was not in humanity's distant past, but was ever present, lurking behind this thin veneer of social mores that separates civilized human beings from barbarians.

Campaigning for reelection, President Bush has noted that a fundamental difference separates the United States from religious fundamentalists who behead their prisoners. He cited this difference as the reason why the United States had to stay the course of action in Iraq that has been undertaken, why retreat was not possible, why responsibility for freedom could not be entrusted to old political alliances headed by a nation that surrendered to terrorism in Algeria forty years ago, surrendered when I was in high school and daily following the events that happened there and in Cuba, where nuclear-tipped missiles were installed. Kennedy faced down Khrushchev, who was emboldened by perceived American foreign policy weaknesses. And for too many, perception becomes reality, but perception does not reveal the hearts of the people involved. The perception of Islamic fundamentalists has been that America is soft, and indeed, the nation is as if it suffers through a bout of misused prosperity. The perception of Islamic fundamentalists is that America is immoral—and immorality exists in the nation's highest office.

A semen-stained blue dress in the White House suggests that Islamic fundamentalists are correct about all of America being immoral. If perceptions were realities, then these fundamentalists who advocate a return to barbarism to correct sexual immortality would have the moral high ground from which they cannot be dislodged. But the battle against terrorism will be fought and won or lost on the mental topography of humanity, not on the geography of a region or of a nation. And this battle will be won by the Greco-Roman values embedded in democratic republics, by the values that varnish the veneer of civilization, but it will not be won by turning control of this mental battlefield over to those who support immorality in any form.

The bombings that daily occur in Israel, in Iraq, in other hot spots can occur anywhere. They can occur here as happened on September 11th. They probably will occur here again regardless of who wins the election Tuesday, for the war being fought isn't between nations or even between ethnic peoples. It is a religious war that doesn't merely pit Islam against secular Christianity, but pits fundamental morality received from a supreme deity against the false prophets of humanism. This war pits the mindset that human beings are basically good if left to their own devices against the reality that human beings are not "good," but fully subject to disobedience and rebellion.

The perception in the United States is that Anglo-Europeans sit at the apex of civility, that we are somehow different than the barbarians. But this difference has apparently developed since Henry had Sir Thomas More's head lopped off, and since Lady Jane Gray was burned at the stake, with a bag of gunpowder around her neck to ease her suffering when the flames were upon her. This alleged difference developed since Joseph Smith was lynched, and since Hitler sent millions to their graves and Stalin sent millions more to the Gulag—since black men throughout the South were lynched, since Los Angeles' Watts riots, since Ruby Ridge and Waco and Wounded Knee. The timeline for American barbarism circles back upon itself to include smallpox inflected blankets given to peaceful tribes, and civilized nations marched over a Trail of Tears.

The veneer of civilization is, indeed, exceedingly thin—and might be more perception than reality. Regardless, the current presidential race is a measurement of this veneer,

for a real difference separates Bush from Kerry. This difference is heard in their rhetoric, and understood by their respective political bases. This difference will determine how and where the on-going war between religious fundamentalists will be fought, not if such a war should be or will be fought. The war between Puritanism and Humanism has seen many truces. But the Declaration of War for this “civil” conflict was signed long before Henry VIII sought another wife. It was fought with pikes and dog-lock muskets a century after Lady Jane Gray perished—and won on the field by the Puritans, but lost in the hearts and in the minds of those Englishmen and Irishmen who preferred a Roman Catholic king to the son of Oliver Cromwell.

Almost a decade ago (1994), the United States mentally underwent civil war that divided the nation into two peoples when the old social order empowered in the highest national offices refused to purge itself of immorality, refused even to assign a common meaning to the signifier *immorality*. This division was apparent for everyone to see in the *red-blue* maps of the 2000 presidential election. This division remains, and will further intensify as the two mental or spiritual nations that occupy the same geography solidify ideological borders.

The mental division of England between Puritans and Catholics in the 16th-Century erupted into a real civil war by the middle of the 17th-Century. This division immigrated to North America, where British Colonials temporarily papered over it with the writing of the Declaration of Independence. But it erupted into a real civil war here by the middle of the 19th-Century, when a new generation of social puritans fought against the old order of states' rights. And it will again erupt into a real civil war before the middle of the 21st-Century—if a common enemy doesn't divert the attention of both neo-puritans and the old social order—for the person who opposes abortion cannot compromise with the person who is pro-choice. The same for gay marriage, and for any number of other issues that can be couched in religious rhetoric that flanks the static ideological Maginot Line of the old social order.

One candidate will, on Tuesday, represent the neo-puritans; one will represent the old social coalitions that foregrounded the liberal ideals that color the veneer of civility. Both will receive the votes of the candidates' base. Both will, despite their rhetoric, make war against Islamic fundamentalists, but one will win that war because it will fight with ideas, with a language that promises purity. And one candidate will lose this war against barbarity, for he will end up resorting to barbarism to obtain peace in his time. One will fight for the mental topography of the region; the other will concede this mental topography to the fundamentalists for the promise of peace.

The mistake Islamic fundamentalists make is to believe Western nations will not unite in a crusade for political and economic reasons that are expressed in the rhetoric of a religious campaign against terrorism. Such a crusade will leave both sides losers—and will leave the veneer of civilization as shards in the flotsam of history.

* * *

November 1, 2004

Commentary — From the Margins *The Way We Live*

In "The Way We Live" section of the October 28, 2004 edition of the *Detroit Free Press*, Susan Ager reports that her recent column, "A Saddened Mom's Letter to her Church" brought a long, thoughtful, but unsigned e-mail response from a Catholic priest. The column to which the priest replied was about the church endorsing Proposal 2, a state

constitutional ban against gay marriage or civil union. The priest said that he struggled with the conflict between loyalty to his Archbishop and care for those same-sex couples "who are models of love, dedication and faithfulness" that are in his pews each Sunday. He went on to write, "'The crisis of conscience is demoralizing and disturbing.'"

Meaning is assigned to words, a truism too often forgotten when phrases such as models of *love*, *dedication* and *faithfulness* are sincerely uttered by a secularly minded clergyman. The priest wrote that many of these same-sex couples have children—same-sex couples require the input of a third party of the opposite sex to have children. Where are the absent parents in these models of love, dedication and faithfulness?

In the middle of the 1st-Century, the fledgling Christian Church faced a crisis of conscience that was demoralizing and disturbing. The patriarch Abraham was then and remains the father of the faithful. The single great nation promised to Abraham consisted of all who are faithful to *YHWH*, his *Elohim*. This naming expression of deity is exclusionary, not inclusive. It excludes everyone who is not a circumcised Israelite. It excludes Greeks, Egyptians, Chaldeans and Chinese—unless members of these excluded ethnic peoples became proselytes through circumcision, baptism, and a gift to the temple. By covenant, uncircumcised peoples could have no relationship with *YHWH*, Israel's *Elohim*. And then, the promise was not to all of Abraham's descendants, but to Isaac, and to Jacob, their fathers' second born sons.

Jesus, an observant Jew, circumcised on the eighth day according to the traditions of Moses, was the model for how His disciples were to live. The everlasting covenant made with Abraham would have any uncircumcised male cut off from the holy nation of Israel. So those men from Judea who taught, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1), were on firm theological ground; for circumcision was the ratifying sign of the covenant through which Abraham received the use of the Breath of God (*Pneuma 'Agion*) as the addition of the voiced radical /*ah*/ to his name reveals. Only, these men from Judea didn't understand what circumcision represented. They didn't know that the foreskin represented the natural skin covering of man, that its removal caused a man to spiritually appear naked before God just as the first Adam in Eden was physically naked, clothed only with his obedience to God. When that obedience ended, Adam saw himself as he was—and he made for himself an apron of fig leaves which left him still naked before God, who killed animals in Eden and made for Adam and his wife skin clothing before driving them from Eden.

Paul and Barnabas hotly disputed what the men from Judea taught about the necessity of circumcision to be saved. At Calvary, Jesus of Nazareth became the garment that clothes all who have been born from above through receipt of the Holy Spirit. Christ Jesus had lived naked before His *Elohim*, and He as the *Logos* made flesh had needed no clothing other than His obedience to the law of God. Death is the earned wage for lawlessness, for sin. Because Jesus broke no law of God, death had no claim against His life. He had to be made sin through taking on the sins of all Israel as the reality of the *Azazel* or scapegoat before He could die as the paschal lamb for the household of God, a lamb appropriate to the size of the household. And the holy nation of Israel went from being the moon, the reflected glory of God, to being the woman clothed with the sun (Rev 12:1), clothed with the righteousness of the Son of Man.

In the creation account, on the 4th day, *Elohim* made two great lights, one for the day and one for the night—to separate the light from the darkness (Gen 1:16–18). Both lights rule over darkness. But the greater light is the source of the reflected light of the lesser sign that rules through the night, sometimes reflecting the fullness of the greater light, sometimes visibly absent (at the conjunction) from the night sky. This distinction between the sun and the moon symbolizes the distinction between the outwardly circumcised nation and the Church, cloaked for a season by the brightness of the sun.

There have been, from Abraham since, righteous men and women in Israel, who, as Abraham did, kept God's law (Gen 26:5), which was neither far from them, nor too hard to keep (Deut 30:11). These men and women received circumcised hearts and minds (v. 6), a euphemistic expression for receiving the Breath of God after they turned to God and returned to obedience in a far land. By faith, these men and women who lived before the man Jesus of Nazareth was born of a woman "conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword...received back their dead by resurrection" (Heb 11:33–35). These men and women formed the symbolic woman that gave birth to the man-child who will rule all nations with a rod of iron (Rev 12:5); they preceded born-from-above disciples who, because of the better promises added to the second covenant, receive the Holy Spirit prior to obedience. These disciples of the glorified Jesus receive the Holy Spirit while they mentally live in foreign lands as children of disobedience (Eph 2:3). Spiritual birth is what causes these drawn (John 6:44, 65) and chosen (John 15:16) individuals to mentally leave the topography of their nativity and journey to Judea, where they will live as Jesus lived. His righteousness clothes them on their journey; His righteousness causes them to spiritually appear without spot or blemish. But they can remove His cloak of righteousness through physical circumcision before He removes this cloak through individual empowerment by the Holy Spirit which will liberate each disciple from the law of sin and death that still dwells in the members of the Body (Rom 7:25). When the Son of Man is revealed (Luke 17:26–30), the Body of Christ will be unclothed, except for its obedience to the law of God. The Body will then be as the circumcised nation has been since Abraham circumcised his household.

The Judeans that disputed with Paul and Barnabas were all teachers of the law; they thought they understood circumcision. But they didn't understand that the act of circumcision effectively caused a newly-born disciple to put off the righteousness of Christ Jesus and cover himself with his own righteousness, with his own obedience to the laws of God when judgment was upon him. Circumcision inevitably condemned spiritual infants to the second death, thereby making the men from Judea spiritual murderers.

But the Body of Christ, now nearly two millennia old, is no longer a spiritual infant. It has, for these centuries, the record of the mid-1st Century Jerusalem Conference, which established a very low barre for Christian fellowship. New disciples were "to abstain from things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood" (Acts 15:20). Everything else that disciples needed to know could be learned from hearing Moses read every Sabbath in the synagogues (v. 21).

The entrance requirement for fellowship in the Body of Christ is abstention from sexual immorality...what constitutes sexual immorality? Does same-sex coupling constitute sexual immorality? In the world, same-sex coupling requires breaking fidelity in order to continue the species—and what the world does is really not the prerogative of the Church, for disciples are called out of the world. Disciples are to mentally leave the world, are to mentally relocate themselves to the hill country of Judea just as Abraham physically left the land of his nativity and journeyed to these same hills where he lived without a permanent abode, for the patriarch sought a city from above.

The priest who saw the same-sex couples as models of love no more understands love than the men of Judea with whom Paul and Barnabas disputed understood circumcision. The old creature called by God is to be crucified with Christ just as that circumcised nation which left Egyptian bondage died in the Wilderness of Sin, only to be replaced by its physically uncircumcised children. If this old creature were gay, then a gay man or woman has been nailed to the cross, a means of death that isn't instantaneous, but slowly kills through suffocation—through depriving the weakening body of its ability to breathe. The natural breath that the first Adam received from Elohim (Gen 2:7) must be lost so

that the new creature, born-from-above through the Breath of God, will solely occupy the tabernacle that once belonged to this child of God's human parent. If the human parent corrupts the child, the child, too, will die; this child of God will lose its spiritual breath in the lake of fire. So these models of love are really no models at all for disciples.

In the past two millennia, the Body of Christ, under the cloak of His righteousness, hasn't grown robust and spiritually sound, but has become the flabby torso of a drunk, immoral and utterly lawless. Because His Body has been clothed in His righteousness, Christ has kept His Body spotless and without blemish while He awaited the arrival of the fullness of iniquity. When this fullness has been reached, the Son of Man will be revealed—this event will begin seven years of tribulation, the hard labor birth pains of the woman bringing many sons of God to glory. The Body only has to maintain itself blemish-free for seven years. But after seven months, it will sew for itself an apron of fig leaves, for it will take to itself the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It will rebel against God. It will not believe the two witnesses who testify that by faith the laws of God can be kept, that these laws are neither far from the hearts and minds of disciples, nor too hard to keep. It will, instead, believe the ten witnesses that are the miry clay mixed with iron of the toes of Babylon ... [actually, the Body of Christ has been dead since the late 1st-Century, and will not be resurrected to life until the Tribulation begins].

When the Body of Christ is revealed, appearing thereby as naked as Adam was in Eden when his only clothing was his obedience to God, the greater Church will not require that disciples abstain from sexual immorality, and from what has been polluted by idols. Instead, this spiritually firstborn child of God will embrace models of love that are abhorrent to God, for its teachers refuse to break the legs of their own old creatures, crucified with Christ, but live on through taught lawlessness. These teachers will perform mighty works in Jesus' name, but He will deny knowing them in their judgment (Matt 7:21–23). The priest needs to realize that the gay person who was called by Christ has also been crucified with Christ. If Christ had not died on the cross, the priest would have no hope of salvation. Likewise, if his old creature doesn't die on the cross, he has no hope of salvation.

* * *

November 17, 2004

Commentary — From the Margins *The Greater Church*

Recently an issue arose over which an alleged disciple took offense. This individual felt that he wasn't heard, and he wished to take his offense before the Church. One problem immediately became apparent: who or what constitutes the Church?

The Church is not a building, nor a denomination. It is the called-out ones, the collection of all who have been drawn by God the Father and called by Christ Jesus. This drawing and calling causes the individual, a son (or daughter) of disobedience, to mentally or spiritually leave the world through beginning to live by the laws of God that have been written upon the person's heart and placed in the person's mind. When this person was yet far from God and actually hostile to God (Rom 8:7), the person was chosen by God to become a son through birth from above. This person didn't first choose God, didn't first choose to turn his or her life over to God. This person didn't first make the decision to accept Jesus as his or her personal savior. Rather, God selects who receives spiritual birth in this age. Unless a person is foreknown to God (Rom 8:29), the

person's chance for salvation occurs following death and resurrection, occurs in the great White Throne Judgment; for today is only a (indefinite article) day of salvation.

Once foreknown and drawn (John 6:44, 65), a person's choice is whether to accept spiritual judgment through joining himself or herself to the Body of Christ by the ritual of baptism, the symbolic act of killing the old person whom God consigned to disobedience (Rom 11:32). Judgment follows death; it doesn't precede death for human beings. Therefore, until a death occurs, there can be no judgment. But judgment is today upon the household of God (*cf.* Heb 9:27; 1 Pet 4:17). Thus, the entirety of the Body of Christ (i.e., the Church) has taken, as far as God is concerned, actual death upon itself through baptism.

In order for an actual death to occur without the loss of life, a person must necessarily be born a second time, this birth being from above and coming through receiving the Holy Spirit, though receiving a second life from the receipt of the Breath of God (*Pneuma 'Agion*). Hence, all Christians have been born once of water (i.e., of the water of the womb), and once of Spirit: i.e., all have received life in the heavenly realm in the same manner as Adam received life in this physical realm. Living human beings are spiritual corpses in the same way as Adam was a physical corpse until *Elohim* breathed the breath of life into his nostrils (Gen 2:7). Through receipt of the breath of life, Adam became a breathing creature, a *nephesh*. He was a one-of creation, as is every Christian today. Until the Holy Spirit is poured out upon all flesh in a manner foreshadowed by what happened on the day of Pentecost that followed Calvary, every Christian is drawn and called one at a time. When the Holy Spirit is poured out upon all flesh, even the nature of the great predators will change. The lion will lie down with the lamb. And the Holy Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh (Joel 2:28) when the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Most High and His Christ (Rev 11:15 & Dan 7:9–14). This will happen when Satan and his angels are cast from heaven halfway through seven years of tribulation (Rev 12:9–10). Satan will then no longer reign over the sons of disobedience through being the prince of the power of the air.

But spiritual birth through an individual's drawing and calling has not been the teaching of the greater Christian Church. This is not a teaching that can be used for political gain, not a teaching upon which great cathedrals can be built, not a teaching that produces employment for individuals and financial stability for institutions. It is not a democratic teaching. Therefore, spiritual birth through being foreknown, predestined, called, and justified goes against the Greco-Roman values of the modern Western world.

It is the anti-democratic nature of being foreknown, drawn and called that has prevented understanding of what being born again, or born-from-above actually signifies—and prevented what it actually signifies from being taught in the modern era of the Church.

The Church collectively no more understands what being born of Spirit means than did Nicodemus. All of humanity will receive one chance for salvation—and only one! For most everyone, this chance will occur during the great White Throne Judgment, when all who have lived without being foreknown and drawn will be resurrected and judged. In this resurrection, they will receive life from above. They will be alive for a short while in a manner analogous to the two lawbreakers crucified with Jesus at Calvary. If they seek to save their returned lives, they will judge themselves unworthy of spiritual life; if they acknowledge their guilt and ask to be remembered, they will be glorified. So God is only undemocratic in that He chooses when a person will receive the person's only chance for salvation. God is not a respecter of persons, offering salvation to one person and not to another. God offers salvation to all who have drawn the breath of life. Thus, if a person is in this age drawn and called, the old nature of the person is also as the lawbreakers

crucified with Jesus were. If the person's old nature seeks to save its life, the person will lose both his or her physical life as well as the person's spiritual life.

For most Christians, the Church consists of those disciples who believe as they do—and this is the ultimate form of an antidemocratic belief system. Thus, Latter Day Saints tend to label all other self-identified Christians as Gentiles. The Roman Church accepts Protestants as errant daughters, but will label a Latter Day Saint a heretic. Conservative Lutherans will not accept liberal Lutherans as genuine disciples; Baptists will not accept some other Baptists as genuine. Seventh Day Adventists do not accept Sabbath-keeping disciples taught by Herbert Armstrong as genuine, and vice versa. And this listing of who doesn't accept whom as genuine could carry on for pages.

A genuine Christian is anyone drawn and called, baptized for the death of the old self, and who mentally leaves the world and begins to live as Jesus lived. Through receipt of the Holy Spirit and a journey of faith that cleanses the heart, this person has the laws of God written on his or her heart and mind. This person knows right from wrong, knows the commandments, and keeps them to the best of the person's ability. This person is holy through being drawn and called. This person now lives as one who has been made holy, or this person is a hypocrite. And no hypocrite—anyone who knows to do right and chooses not to—will enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt 5:20). The person's righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees, who had the law of God but didn't keep it (John 7:19).

The Church consists of all genuine disciples, regardless of denominational affiliation. Genuine disciples will, most likely, be found in every denomination; for genuine disciples are identified through their production of the fruit of the Spirit. Everyone who knows Christ Jesus keeps His commandments (1 John 2:3–4), for His commandments are written on their hearts and in minds. But the Church does not consist of just those individuals who today keep the Sabbath on the seventh day as all disciples should. Nor does it consist of just those Sabbath-keepers baptized by any particular organization. As many false brethren exist in Sabbath-keeping fellowships as exist in Sunday-keeping fellowships. Thus, an unknown Sabbath-keeper choosing to be offended has no more spiritual standing in a fellowship that is not his or her own than does the Pope in Rome have in a Sabbath-keeping fellowship, or the Prophet from Salt Lake City have in the Vatican.

Jesus said that a person would recognize His disciples by their love for one another.

The English linguistic icon love has been assigned so many objects (i.e., meanings) that the icon is virtually worthless. This is an objection Sir Thomas More had to the translation of Master Tynsdale. And this remains a valid objection to using love as a test of who is a genuine disciple of Christ Jesus.

Upon His coming, the Messiah will, in love, kill everyone who has taken the mark of the beast. When the Church rebels against God 2300 days before all things are restored, God will, in love, send a great delusion over those who have rebelled so that they cannot repent; God will, in love, condemn them to the lake of fire while they are yet alive. For ancient Israel's release from physical bondage, God, in love, ransomed Egypt by killing their firstborn of man and beast (Isa 43:3). For spiritual Israel's release from spiritual bondage, God will, in love, ransom spiritual Babylon's firstborn (v. 4) by killing a third of humanity (this is the event that begins seven years of tribulation, the hard labor pains of the Church giving birth to many sons of God). And many self-identified Christians will immediately object and say, *My God would never do that*. Their god might not, but the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will.

Love at times means making hard decisions, means doing what is best for another person regardless of the cost to oneself. When more than one person is involved, such as in a family situation, love requires prioritizing what is best for all involved. A husband

cannot give, to the detriment of his family, all of his resources away to help a neighbor; yet the husband remains his brother's keeper as shown in Jesus' example of the Good Samaritan. Thus, a disciple, in love, will fight for his or her brother, sister, or neighbor before he or she will fight for himself or herself. And at times, love means resisting the evil of this world with all that is lawful for a Christian to use.

The brotherly love that the Asia Minor city of Philadelphia represented was that of a younger brother fighting to win a kingdom for his older brother. Jesus gives every generation of drawn and called disciples as His foreknown younger brothers (Rom 8:29–30) the opportunity to fight to win the kingdom He has already won. This fight isn't with swords or with bullets, but with words and ideas. His kingdom is not of this world. If it were, then His disciples would bear arms in their fight for Him. But since His kingdom is of heaven and of the world to come, the fight is for righteousness, for living one's life as a light to the world, for teaching newly drawn and called disciples to live as spiritual Judeans while continuing to dwell in Babylon until that spiritual kingdom falls halfway through seven years of tribulation.

Too many disciples will not fight for righteousness. They will not fight against the law of sin and death that dwells in their members (Rom 7:25). They will not fight against spiritual wickedness. They are confused pacifists. They will wait for God to do their fighting for them. They will wait for God to spiritually clean them up; they will wait for God to drive out the wicked spirits that reign over them. They will not fight for their brother; they will not lay down their lives for their brother.

When contending with Satan, Jesus rebuked the devil. He didn't wait for His Father to rebuke Satan. He correctly cited the Word of God back to Satan, then commanded Satan to leave. And by the authority the glorified Jesus bestowed upon His disciples—not upon any denomination—foreknown sons of God have the power to retain or forgive sins (John 20:23). This authority to retain or forgive sins is the power of Christ Himself, so Jesus has given to His younger brethren His power. With faith, disciples can do what He did, even to driving out the moneychangers from the temple of God (disciples are today the temple).

Genuine disciples use the cloak of grace to practice walking upright before God. There will be no need for this cloak when disciples are liberated from bondage to the law of sin that dwells in their members, liberated in a manner analogous to how the ancient nation of Israel was liberated from physical bondage in Egypt. The Church as the Body of Christ, as the Body of the Son of Man, will be revealed (Luke 17:26–30) when the Tribulation begins. And as it was in the days of Noah when only seven pairs of clean or holy animals and a single pair of unclean animals entered the ark with the Eight, the majority of humanity will be taken unawares. They will not have practiced walking uprightly before God, and they will be consigned to death.

Today, disciples fight for righteousness in first their own lives, then in the lives of their brothers. They are their brothers' keepers. And this fight can be won; victory is assured if the person will spiritually crucify the person's former self. But crucifixion is a slow and exceedingly painful means of death. So is killing the old self, which has a strong desire to live. Killing the old self takes time and has an emotional cost. But if a person is not willing to lay down his or her physical life for the new life born from above that now also resides in the same tabernacle of flesh, that new life will be stillborn. In love, God the Father and Jesus His glorified Son will have this younger sibling thrown into the lake of fire.

If as a drawn and called disciple you wait for God to clean up you, if you will not begin to live as a Judean while still in a far country, then Jesus died in vain. There was no need for the Logos to come as a man and die on the cross for you.

Jesus died so that you, while still a son of disobedience, could be reconciled to God the Father. He died so that the Father could draw you from the world through His Holy Spirit. He died so that you, while hostile to God, could be born from above. Without spiritual birth, you would never leave the world; you would never begin living within the laws of God; you would never know that you need a Savior. So spiritual birth precedes answering an altar call, or giving your heart to the Lord. It precedes baptism. You are made holy when drawn from the world. It is now your obligation to live worthy of your drawing and calling.

Therefore, the Church today lacks any formal organization in this world. It is not in a position to collectively decide a manner. It doesn't exist nationally or internationally as it did in the middle of the 1st Century. Ministries cross national boundaries with hardly a glitch. So an offended brother who doesn't regularly share meals with the one causing the offense can continue not sharing meals without affecting in any way the one who has caused the offense. Shunning only works within the local community. It doesn't affect the one who never was a part of the community, or who only marginally interacted with the community.

Disciples, because of the development of denominations, are today in the same position as Daniel and his friends were in Babylon. They must either suffer the wrongs of a so-called brother, or they must use the civil authorities to rectify these wrongs. The greater Church, because of *denominalization*, while retaining the authority lacks the ability to shun a brother or to restore a shunned brother to fellowship. While disciples will judge angels in the future, they lost their ability to effect judgments in civil manners when the Church formally went into spiritual captivity in the 4th-Century. When the Church allowed Emperor Constantine to determine sound doctrine (ca. 325 CE), the Church was taken captive by the king of spiritual Babylon. And this captivity will not end until Babylon (i.e., the image Nebuchadnezzar saw) falls halfway through seven years of tribulation.

Needless to say, God retains the option to intervene in a matter between brothers. But this is an option He has been historically slow to exercise. *Denominalization* would never have developed if He were quick to employ His authority to rectify wrongs, and to heal breaches. Hence, an injured brother will either accept the injury—which should be done if possible—or this injured brother will need to petition civil authorities for redress. The endtime Church is not in a position to effectively intervene in disputes between self-identified Christians. The greater Church has developed into a bickering faction within the global polis identified as spiritual Babylon. And this faction has so little love for itself that it routinely teaches newly drawn and called disciples how to commit spiritual suicide by erasing the laws of God written on these tender hearts and minds.

* * *

November 30, 2004

Commentary — From the Margins

The Remainder of the Temptation

Mel Gibson's movie *The Temptation* powerfully conveys the suffering of Christ Jesus when *Theos*, the *Logos*, was made sin for the salvation of humanity. But servants are not greater than their Master. Jesus said that if they, the religious leaders of the holy nation of Israel, persecuted Him, they will similarly persecute His disciples. This is not persecution by civil authorities, but by those who believe they do God a favor when they

kill Believers. Thus, Gibson's movie leaves unshown the remainder of the spiritual temptation account foreshadowed in Genesis, when disobedience produced death.

The creation narrative (Gen 1:1 through 2:3) is the abstract for the plan of redemption conceived before the foundations of the universe were strung. In this abstract, *Elohim* (plural) agree to make humankind in their image, and after their likeness (v. 26). And *Elohim* (singular) creates humankind in His own image; He creates humankind male and female (v. 27) on the sixth day. He then finishes His creation and rests from all of His labors on the seventh day; He makes the seventh day holy. And by making the day holy, He set the day apart for His use—being made holy, or being sanctified conveys the sense that the thing or person has been separated from similar things or people for God's use. On this thing or person, God has exercised His claim of ownership. And on the seventh day of a creation week, *Elohim* (singular) rests from His work of creating. The entirety of the creation is completed with Him resting on this seventh day.

But on the cross at Calvary, the *Logos*, born as the man Jesus of Nazareth, says, *It is finished*, and He dies (John 19:30). Something wasn't finished when the *Logos* was born as the man Jesus of Nazareth, and what wasn't finished was the plan of salvation, the pathway by which mortal human beings could be made one with God. The work of Redemption remained undone until Jesus died at Calvary.

The need for salvation doesn't occur until after lawlessness enters the world through Adam, for with lawlessness came death (Rom 5:12). Lawlessness or sin (1 John 3:4) first appeared when Eve believed the serpent that she would not die, and she eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She then became like God, knowing good and evil (Gen 3:22), thereby able to decide for herself what is good, which potentially placed her at odds with God.

Eve's disobedience, however, was covered by her husband, from whom she was made. Thus, when Adam ate, sin entered the world for Adam was a son of God (he had no other parent but God). His covering for sin was his obedience to God. As such, it is his disobedience that condemns all of his descendants to death. And it is the last Adam's (1 Co 15:45) obedience that covers this death sentence so that a second birth becomes possible for every descendant of Adam. Therefore, what was finished at Calvary was the solution for what was introduced through the first Adam's disobedience—and as typology will show, the solution was in place before the problem was created. Hence, *Elohim* (singular) could rest from all of His labors on the seventh day.

Too often, disciples read over the creation account, and over the single verse of genealogy (Gen 2:4) that serves as a narrative marker. They place the creation and temptation account of Eve in the week[s] following the creation of the Sabbath. This, however, cannot be so, for in verse 27 of the creation account *Elohim* (singular) creates the helpmate. ... [What part of the creation is not completed in the declarative sentence, *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth?* Are the heavens created? Yes, they are. Are the sun and moon created—they're part of the heavens, so yes, they are. Is not Adam created on the day when God made the earth and the heavens (Gen 2:4-7) Yes, he is! So Adam is created on day one, in the dark portion of the day before God called forth light in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Co 4:6). Therefore, Jesus is the light of day one. And the Genesis chapter one creation account has been misread for millennia.]

Elohim creates no other female before Eve, or at least none that Scripture records. He creates no man before He creates Adam, who is created outside of Eden, then placed in Eden, then names the animals, from which no helpmate was found. And a deep sleep falls over Adam during which *Elohim* takes a rib from Adam's side, and inside of Eden, creates the woman.

Jesus of Nazareth as the last Adam was born into the tribe of Judah, none of whom were qualified to serve as High Priest. Yet Jesus serves as the High Priest (Heb 9:11) of the spiritual holy nation of God (1 Pet 2:9). As such, expounding only a portion of a long typological argument, Jesus was born outside of the spiritual Garden of Eden as the first Adam was born outside of a physical Garden of Eden. But by the 1st-Century, the Garden of Eden and the Promised Land of Judea had been reduced in geographical size to the area of the temple mount at Jerusalem (disciples are now the temple of God). And Jesus was placed in the temple by God the Father in the same way that Adam was born outside of the Garden of Eden then placed in the Garden of God by *Elohim* (singular). There, in the temple, Jesus names the animals (hypocrites, vipers — Matt chap 23) from which no helpmate was found. So a deep sleep/death comes over Him, and from a wound in His side, the last Eve was created inside the spiritual Garden of Eden (in the minds of His disciples) when the glorified Jesus breathes on ten of His disciples and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit (*Pneuma 'Agion*)" (John 20:22). And the Church as the last Eve will give birth to the many heirs of God when the glorified Jesus marries this Bride—He marries the Church when He returns as the Messiah to reign over humanity for a thousand years. Therefore, the Church's desire today is for her husband (to be), Christ Jesus, and the Church's salvation is in childbirth. But the Church will experience great pain in childbirth; i.e., the hard labor pains of the Church bringing many heirs to glory are the seven years of tribulation that immediately precede the Second Coming of Christ Jesus. So *Elohim's* pronouncement against the first Eve will come to pass spiritually for the last Eve immediately prior to when Christ Jesus begins His rest as the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

The Psalmist (Ps 95:10–11) and the writer of Hebrews typologically link the Promised Land of Judea with God's rest, a diminutive type of which is the weekly Sabbath day (Heb 4:9), with the larger type being Christ's millennial reign over humanity after the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon all flesh. The reality of this rest is glorification of the saints as younger brethren to Christ Jesus. Therefore, the seventh day of the physical creation week is analogous to, or a type of the seventh millennium of a spiritual creation week, which in turn will be a type or shadow of Heaven. And because the last Adam will not marry His Bride until He returns at the end of the sixth millennium, or sixth spiritual day, Satan is cast from heaven (Rev 12:9–10) before the wedding supper. Hence, in Genesis, *Elohim's* pronouncement against the serpent, a representation of Satan, no longer walking upright but being condemned to crawl on his belly (Gen 2:14) comes from Satan being cast into time. All of Eve's temptation account occurs in the dark portion of day one of the creation week.

The philosophical problems that arise from the weekly Sabbath being a diminutive type of God's rest are not because the typology used is faulty, but because the greater Church as the last Eve swallowed Satan's lie that She would not die (Gen 3:4), that Jesus saying that the Gates of Hades would not prevailed against Her (Matt 16:18) meant that She would not die, and that human beings have immortal souls. Thus, the greater Church teaches some form of belief that has the regenerated soul entering God's rest at death. As a result, this last Eve ate the forbidden fruit of determining for Herself sound doctrine. She, in her cloak of Christ's righteousness, decided She would enter heaven before she was judged worthy or unworthy (1 Co 4:5 — Paul writes that judgments will be revealed when Jesus returns). And in the cool of the evening, just before the rest of God begins, She will be driven from the Garden. She will be like the Israelites that left Egypt, in that She will not enter God's rest because of unbelief that becomes disobedience when She tries to enter the following day (Heb 3:19 & 4:6).

The Son of Man will be revealed at the end of the age (Luke 17:26–30). The Son of Man will be made naked, with His only covering being His obedience to God. Christ

Jesus is the head of the Son of Man. He was obedient; He was without sin. And today, the Church is clothed in His righteousness as if His righteousness were a garment. This is the reality of grace.

Disciples form the Body of Christ; hence, disciples form the Body of the Son of Man, revealed suddenly in the same manner as the flood of Noah's day came upon all the earth. Christ's righteousness will be suddenly removed from the Body. It will no longer be needed when the Body is liberated from bondage to the law of sin that has dwelt in its members (Rom 7:25)—liberated in a manner analogous to how the ancient nation of Israel was liberated from physical bondage to Pharaoh. And once liberated, the Body's covering for sin will be its obedience to the laws of God. The Body will be as the Head was during Jesus' earthly ministry. The Body will be empowered by the Holy Spirit as Jesus' disciples were in Matthew chapter ten. And the Body, by faith, will be able to cover its nakedness with its obedience to God. To say otherwise will be blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, will be saying that the Holy Spirit did not liberate the person from bondage to sin and is not sufficient for obedience.

If the Body practices disobedience—and the Body will (2 Thess 2:3) when the man of sin is revealed—the Body will be driven from the Garden before it eats of the tree of life. The Body (i.e., the greater Christian Church) has not used grace to practice walking uprightly before God, has not used grace to practice keeping the laws of God. Therefore, when the Son of Man is revealed, the Body will see its nakedness, its disobedience before God. It will see itself as grasshoppers in comparison to the sons of Anak (Num 13:33). It will see obedience to God as a giant too large to defeat. And it will return to sin, to a spiritual Egypt, by trying to enter God's rest on the following day.

The physical creation week was seven days long, not eight. *Elohim* (singular) didn't rest on the first day. His last act of creating was to rest on the seventh day. So when liberated from sin, if the Body of the Son of Man attempts to enter God's rest on the first day of the week, or on the eighth day (i.e., the first day of the following week), the Body blasphemes the Holy Spirit. However, the Body—like the ancient nation that left Egypt—will, according to prophecy, attempt to enter God's rest on the following day, and for doing so the entire nation of Israel died in the wilderness. Likewise, when the Body tries to enter God's rest on the day following the Sabbath, God will send a great delusion over the Body (2 Thess 2:11–12) so that the entirety of the Body will perish because it didn't love righteousness enough to have practiced walking uprightly before God when still cloaked in grace. Eve was driven from Eden before she could eat of the tree of life and live eternally. So too will the last Eve be driven out of the temple and away from the marriage supper because of Her uncovered lawlessness.

An apron of fig leaves will not cover nakedness caused by disobedience to God. The wages of sin is death. Sin requires the shedding of blood. And *Elohim* (singular) covered Adam and Eve's sin with garments of animal skins—because of sin, animals had to die in Eden prior to Adam and Eve being driven from this garden of God.

The remainder of the temptation of the Son of Man occurs when the seven years of endtime tribulation begin. Except for a remnant represented by Joshua and by Caleb, the entirety of the greater Church will be consigned to death during the first 1260 days of the Tribulation. The Church won't be bodily raptured to heaven, nor will it go into a place of physical safety during these 1260 days. Rather, it will die just as the nation that left Egypt died in the Wilderness of Sin. If a born-from-above Christian attempts to save his or her physical life through compromising with the laws of God (especially the Sabbath commandment), this disciple will lose his or her spiritual life and will become a spiritual zombie, destined for the lake of fire. If a disciple will willingly sacrifice his or her physical life as Jesus sacrificed His, then this disciple will save his or her spiritual life and will be glorified when Christ returns. The servants are not greater than the Master. The Body of

the Son of Man has had two millennia to practice walking uprightly before God under the covering of grace. It only has to walk uprightly covered by its own obedience through faith for seven years, those years represented by the seven days of Unleavened Bread (Passover Week).

The sadness recorded in prophecy is that 2300 days before Christ returns, the greater Christian Church will rebel against God and will determine for itself right and wrong. It will believe the evil report of the ten witnesses that say obedience to God to too large of a giant to defeat, and it will try to enter God's rest on the following day. On a specified day, the greater Christian Church will determine that it should keep Sunday as the day of rest rather than the Sabbath. And on this specified day, the greater Christian Church will condemn itself to the lake of fire. This greater Church will then, as Cain did Abel, begin to persecute and kill those disciples who keep the Sabbath. And since the servants are not greater than the Master, the disciples who will save their spiritual lives will experience the remainder of The Temptation. These first 1260 days of the Tribulation will be an extremely difficult period for all who remain faithful to God.

But the good news that must be proclaimed to the world before the end of the age comes is that all who endure to the end shall be saved (Matt 24:13–14). When the first two sons of the last Eve are dead—righteous Abel because Cain physically killed him, and Cain because he is a marked murderer—a third son will be born. The Holy Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh (Joel 2:28). All of humanity will become self-identified Christians when Satan is cast from heaven (Rev 12:9) and the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Most High and of His Christ (Rev 11:15). But some "Christians" will take the mark of the beast; some will not. And a type of a Joshua and of a Caleb will lead those disciples who refuse the mark of the beast into God's rest. Thus, those who refuse the mark of the beast, which is the tattoo of the cross (*chi xi stigma* or the *tattoo of Xx*), have only to endure to the end to be saved. Nothing more will be asked of them beyond enduring in faith.

* * *

December 9, 2004

Commentary — From the Margins *The Spiritual Sons of God*

The Son of Man will be revealed with the suddenness of the flood of Noah's day (Luke 17:26–30). People will be going about their business, doing those things that constitute their everyday routines until a specific day and hour when, as the first labor contraction seizes a pregnant woman, the mundane affairs of humanity suddenly cease. Evangelical Christianity has captured the suddenness of this revealing of the Son of Man in its Rapture theology. But this sect of the greater Christian Church has entirely missed the nature of the revealing, which will be the Church's liberation from bondage to sin just as the ancient circumcised nation of Israel was liberated from physical bondage in Egypt. And as a woman going into labor is not interested in politics or social teas or whether laundry needs to be done, the Church, stunned and in great pain, will momentarily cease its denominational quarreling as it is empowered by the Holy Spirit.

But this suspension of quarreling doesn't last: as with a pregnant woman when that first labor contraction passes, the Church will return to its north/south (Arian/Trinitarian) schism as two spiritual forces emerge unfettered and make war against the other. These two theological divisions of the greater Christian Church will constitute a spiritual reality that was foreshadowed by the Greek Seleucid and Ptolemaic

kingdoms' reign over Jerusalem—a reality of the prophet Daniel's long vision (Dan chap 11).

The simplicity of prophecy is perceived through typology, through realizing that the geography of Judea functions as the visible correspondent of God's rest (Ps 95:10–11 & Heb 3:19); i.e., of heaven and of the invisible mental topography of the household of God. Crops grew on Judean hillsides when they received the earlier and the latter rains, analogous to disciples receiving the Holy Spirit. These hills produced two grain-harvests, the early barley harvest and the later wheat harvest, with each crop dependent upon its respective early or later rain. These two grain-harvests correspond to two harvests of disciples, an earlier and a later. Beginning with the Wave Sheaf offering at Passover, the Judean barley harvest corresponds to the harvest of firstfruits, the first of which was Christ Jesus Himself when He was accepted by the Father (John 20:17, 21) as the reality of the Wave Sheaf. The remainder of the first Judean harvest was gathered into barns by the Feast of Weeks (i.e., Pentecost). And the counting of these seven weeks from the Wave Sheaf offering represents the counting of the seven years of the Tribulation, which is also represented by the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (during Unleavened Bread, leavening represents sin, so living without leavened bread becomes analogous to living without sin).

There is no contradiction of metaphors or imagery with the seven days of Unleavened Bread representing the same period that the seven weeks between the Wave Sheaf and the Feast of Weeks represent—or with the geography of Judea also representing knowledge of God. The entirety of the plan of God is represented by the annual High Days that commemorate the harvest seasons of the Judean hill country—glorified human beings are either part of the early barley harvest or the later wheat harvest. This plan, though, is additionally represented and repeated by the spring High Day calendar, and by the fall High Day calendar. The emphasis of the spring calendar is the barley harvest. The fall calendar repeats this plan of God, with emphasis on the later wheat harvest. And again, the entirety of the calendar repeats this plan, thereby revealing that the double harvests are really aspects of a single harvest of the earth. Thus, the second High Day of Passover week (i.e., the last day of Unleavened Bread) commemorates (on the shortened spring calendar) the resurrection and acceptance by the Father of the firstfruits when Jesus returns to begin His millennial reign. Disciples, forming the Body of the Son of Man, will also be revealed when the Son of Man is revealed. The Body, now clothed in the righteousness of Christ, will when revealed cover itself with its own obedience to God as it lives seven years without sin, the seven years of the Tribulation.

When *Elohim* placed Adam in the Garden of Eden, the geographical area represented by the Garden stretched from the Tigris River to approximately the Nile (Gen 2:10–14). When Joshua with the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River, the Promised Land of God stretched from the Jordan to Lebanon. David pushed Israel's geographical boundaries to their largest limit in a manner analogous to him pushing circumcised Israel's spiritual boundaries to their utmost limits, thereby through faith establishing his glorified reign over the spiritual kingdom of Israel (Ezek 37:24–28).

The largeness or smallness of the geographical territory governed by the kings of Israel reflected this holy nation's spiritual health, which was usually poor at best. Following the reign of King Solomon, the single kingdom of Israel divided into a northern (Israel) and a southern (Judah) house. Although the division occurred because Solomon's son Rehoboam desired to raise taxes even higher than had his father, the division was of God because of Solomon's sins, the greatest of which was his many wives and their gods. These foreign wives of Solomon came to represent Israel going after foreign gods, a practice this holy nation never stopped. So first the northern kingdom of Samaria (i.e., the House of Israel) went into captivity because it would not walk uprightly

before God, thereby shrinking the holy nation of Israel to the geographical size of the southern kingdom. Then the southern kingdom was taken captive, leaving only the *polis* of Jerusalem to geographically represent the spirituality of the nation. Finally, even Jerusalem was sacked and burned. Then after seventy years, Cyrus, king of Persia, ordered that a house for God be built in Jerusalem—the geographical Promised Land was now the size of the temple mount, and was under the rule of Babylon. Thus, when Jesus physically entered the temple, He entered all that remained of the Promised Land. Today, disciples are the temple of God. Hence, the mental topography of disciples constitutes the Garden of God, the entirety of the land between the Tigris and the Nile. And in this physical landscape dwelt the circumcised sons of Abraham when they were not in Egyptian bondage. Esau dwelt in Seir. Ishmael dwelt on the Sinai Peninsula, which holds the Wilderness of Sin.

The geographical boundaries of Eden are analogous to the spiritual boundaries in which born-from-above sons of God live. But the Promised Land was not all of this geographical landscape when God made Israel his holy nation (Ex 19:5–6). And not all who have descended from Israel belong to Israel (Rom 9:6). Not all who have descended from spiritual Israel belong to this spiritually holy nation. Not all of Abraham's spiritual sons are chosen—many are called but few are chosen (Matt 22:14).

A mistake some prophecy pundits have made is to assume that prophecies concerning the endtime house of Israel pertain to the geographical lands that the descendants of the house of Israel occupy when the Son of Man is revealed. These prophecies are only tangentially about geographical lands; they primarily pertain to the philosophical or theological or spiritual mental topography of one division of the Church, now the holy nation of God (1 Pet 2:9). The holy nation of Israel went from being a physical nation to being a spiritual nation when the division of humanity through circumcision was abolished (Eph 2:15). Division is today through possession of the Holy Spirit, or birth from above. The kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of the Most High and His Christ (Rev 11:15) when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon all flesh (Joel 2:28) in the manner foreshadowed by what happened on that day of Pentecost following Calvary. So until Satan is cast from heaven halfway through seven years of tribulation (Rev 12:9–10 & Dan 7:9–14) and can no longer reign as the prince of the power of the air (Eph 2:2), the present division of humanity between those who have been born-again and those who still await spiritual birth will remain.

When the *Logos* was born as Jesus of Nazareth, humanity was divided between the circumcised sons of promise (i.e., sons of Isaac), the circumcised sons of slavery (i.e., sons of Ishmael), and the uncircumcised world. The circumcised sons of promise were further divided between those God hated (i.e., the descendants of Esau) and those God loved (i.e., the descendants of Israel) (Rom 9:6–13). Likewise, humanity is today divided between spiritual sons of promise, spiritual sons of slavery, and those who are spiritually uncircumcised. Further, the spiritual sons of promise are today—when no sin is yet imputed to them—divided between those God hates (because they do not love righteousness enough to practice walking uprightly before Him under the cloak of grace) and those God loves.

The above needs to be well understood: not everyone who has been born of Spirit is a spiritually circumcised son of promise. Many born of Spirit sons of God have not left the world, have not mentally relocated themselves to Judea in the manner that Abraham, the father of the faithful, did when told to move (Heb 11:8). These many born-again sons of God are today in spiritual slavery: they form a great nation as the circumcised sons of Ishmael formed a great nation (Gen 21:8–21), but they are not the holy nation of promise even though they are of Abraham's spiritual seed. They do not live as spiritual Judeans, but as spiritual Gentiles. They do not keep the laws of God, but brag of not being under

the law. Their desire is to serve God, but they remain the children of bondage for they continue to serve sin; they continue in their lawlessness as if they were never mentally liberated from bondage to sin or lawlessness (1 John 3:4). Sin is lawlessness. If a person continues in the lawlessness to which the person was consigned (Rom 11:32) after God has mercy upon this person—i.e., after before being born from above, and having his or her sins forgiven—the person becomes a spiritual son of disobedience, a spiritual son of slavery. Thus, the greater Christian Church, composed of all who have the Spirit of God, consists of all spiritual sons of Abraham, including the spiritual sons of Ishmael and the sons of Esau. But the spiritual sons of promise are only those who mentally dwell in Judea. And spiritual Judeans live physically by the laws of God that have been written on their hearts and placed in their minds.

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the saints of Galatia, he used Hagar and Sarah as a metaphor of the physically circumcised versus the spiritually circumcised children of Abraham. He made present day Jerusalem correspond to the physical nation of Israel, with the Jerusalem above corresponding with the nation of promise born from above through the Holy Spirit. Thus, the holy nation of God consigned to death under the law (for the nation's transgressions of the law — Ezek 20:23–24 & John 7:19) corresponded to the children of Ishmael, who themselves had become twelve princes with geographical kingdoms. The spiritually holy nation of God, composed of those who were not before a nation, corresponded to the invisible Jerusalem above. This nation has no geographical confines or borders. Its boundaries are spiritual. And its inhabitants are identified by spiritual circumcision, or circumcised hearts and minds (or souls, from Deut 30:6)

The metaphor of Hagar and Sarah, however, because of its spiritual nature has a second application: everyone born of Spirit is a son of Abraham. Again, the greater Christian Church includes everyone who has been born of Spirit. So those who have been born of Spirit are both the sons of the bond woman, the Egyptian handmaid Hagar, and the sons of the free woman Sarah—and this occurs without injustice on God's part (Rom 9:14). Under the second covenant made with the uncircumcised children of Israel before these children crossed the Jordan (Deut 29:1) to enter God's rest (Ps 95:10–11 & Heb 3:19), God placed before each the choice of life and death (Deut 30:15). If while in captivity in distant lands the children of the Israelites that left Egyptian slavery returned to God and began to keep His laws and commandments, God would bring them back to the promised land and would give them circumcised hearts and minds (vv. 1-2). But none of these children had to experience the curses that caused captivity. All of them could have then kept the laws of God, for the law was neither far from them, nor too hard to keep (v. 11). Likewise, drawn and called spiritual sons of God, born-from-above, can keep the laws and commandments of God. They have that choice set before them just as the children of those Israelites that left Egypt had the choice then before them on the plains of Moab. The free will that all spiritually born sons of God have is their decision of whether they will mentally relocated themselves to Judea to begin living as spiritual Judeans, or whether they will remain living as spiritual bondservants in the world, even though they are no longer of the world.

Just because a person has been born of the Jerusalem above (just as an Israelite physically born into the circumcised nation in Egypt) doesn't mean that the person automatically enters God's rest, represented typologically by the Promised Land of Judea. Again, not all of Israel was Israel. Likewise, not all of spiritual Israel is spiritual Israel. Remember, except for Joshua and Caleb, the circumcised nation that left Egypt did not enter the Promised Land because of its unbelief. The spiritually circumcised nation, except for that portion represented by Joshua and Caleb, will not enter God's rest because of unbelief—because this nation doesn't believe the truth but has pleasure in unrighteousness. And having pleasure in unrighteousness manifests itself as a

continuation of living in bondage to lawlessness when the person has been mentally set free from sin. This is the great nation spiritually derived from Hagar, the Egyptian handmaid.

Disciples are no longer under the law, with its ordinances of death. Rather, disciples have become the tablets upon which the laws of God have been inscribed. And if a person will not attempt to walk uprightly, striving to keep the laws of God, the person will never enter God's rest. The person who practices disobedience makes himself or herself the servant of another spiritual kingdom through choosing death instead of life. The person who by faith keeps the law will live because of the law. This person doesn't seek his or her own righteousness, but strives to live as Jesus did. Righteousness is not a matter of works, of what one's hands do, but of what one thinks. Righteousness is a mindset that will have the person obeying God through keeping His laws even when no one is looking. Righteousness is determining to keep the least of the commandments, then striving to do so for the remainder of the person's natural life. And the least of the commandments is the Sabbath commandment: if a disciple will not keep the Sabbath when no one is looking, then the person is not faithful in the small things of God. The person, either like Esau, doesn't value his or her inheritance enough not to trade it to satisfy physical appetites, or the person, as Ishmael was physically, remains a bondservant of sin/Egypt. In either case, this spiritual son of Abraham will not enter God's rest, for the promise is to Isaac, then to Israel, who wrestled with God and prevailed.

A person is made a spiritual son of God because God will have mercy upon whom He will (Rom 9:15). God doesn't first consult with the person before He draws the person from the world (John 6:44, 65). Rather, the Father draws and Christ calls and the person is born from above without the person having any say in the matter, just as a human infant is born of the water of the womb without the infant's consent. The infant's parents decide (or take the action necessary) for a human infant to be born. So it is with God. A holy son of Abraham is born of Spirit without the affected human being any say in the matter. Only after birth can this spiritual infant influence his or her destiny.

Free will exists for all spiritual sons of God, [but only until the disciple chooses life or death]. Although Ishmael could not help being the son of Hagar, a born-from-above disciple can choose to live as a spiritual Judean, what Paul said that the Apostle Peter taught Greek converts to do (Gal 2:14). Although Esau was rejected when still in the womb (i.e., before he sinned), a born-again disciple chooses rejection by God through not valuing his or her birthright when physically hungry and thirsty, destitute and persecuted. If a disciple is not willing to lose his or her physical life for Christ, the person is not worthy of Christ. If a person is not willing to keep the commandments when the person knows that he or she should, the person chooses rejection. Free will has been exercised. The choice of life or death has been made. Unrighteousness (as in the case of Ishmael) or the person's physical life (as in the case of Esau) were more important to the person than was obedience by faith to God. And too many disciples choose spiritual death when still infants. They listened to and believed so-called men (and women) of God who were/are teachers of iniquity or lawlessness (Matt 7:21–23). They didn't listen to Jesus; they didn't hear or know His voice; and they certainly don't now believe the One who sent Him. Therefore, they will go into the lake of fire when their judgments are revealed at Christ's return.

Caleb was not born as an Israelite. He became one by choice. He left Egypt by choice. And by faith, he counseled Israel to immediately enter the Promised Land of Judea when he, along with the eleven others, returned from spying out God's rest.

God said that Caleb had in him a different spirit than did the other Israelites (Num 14:24). Because of his faith, he entered God's rest, for he was willing to follow God fully. And every son of God who is today living as a spiritual Ishmaelite, or as a spiritual son of

Esau can, as Caleb did, join himself or herself to spiritual Israel by following God fully. This means keeping the commandments of God, even the least of them.

The spring calendar begins with Passover: Jesus as the Lamb of God is the reality of the paschal lamb sacrificed for the firstborn of Israel. The calendar next celebrates Israel's liberation from bondage to Pharaoh (the first High Day of Unleavened Bread). The reality will be the holy nation's liberation from the law of sin and death that dwells in its members (Rom 7:25) at the beginning of the Tribulation, these seven years being the hard labor birth pains of the last Eve bringing sons of God to glory. These seven years will be spent living without sin (the seven days of Unleavened Bread). Then counting as the Sadducees did, the Wave Sheaf offering is made on the Sunday following the weekly Sabbath within Unleavened Bread. This is, within Christianity, Resurrection Sunday, when Jesus was accepted as the reality of the first sheaf of barley harvested in Judea. Then at the conclusion of the seven days of Unleavened Bread is the High Day that commemorates entering into God's rest, when the Messiah comes and the firstfruits are glorified. Now, concluding the spring calendar and after a long wait will come the Feast of Weeks when the last of the harvest is gathered into barns. This is a shadow of the great White Throne Judgment, when the Holy Spirit is given to all physically resurrected human beings who have not previously been born-from-above (this is not a second chance for salvation, but the first chance for individuals who were not previously drawn by the Father and chosen by Christ Jesus). This is also the shadow of the first resurrection as well as the shadow when world is baptized in Spirit, or into life. So the Feast of Weeks represents the giving of life, first in the form of the Holy Spirit, then in the form of mortal flesh putting on immortality.

Each person will only be born-from-above once, just as each person is only born of woman once. There are no second chances to receive salvation. Judgment is today upon the household of God (1 Pet 4:17), upon all who have been born-from-above, but not upon the remainder of humanity. Their judgment will occur after their physical deaths (Heb 9:27 — baptism equates to physical death) and resurrections. They will be like the two thieves crucified with Jesus.

Judgment is today upon all spiritual children of Abraham, upon all who are cloaked in the righteousness of Christ Jesus. These spiritual children of the patriarch will mentally leave the world and begin to life as Judeans, or they will mentally migrate to some other land that is not God's rest, or they will mentally remain where they were when drawn and called. The choice is theirs, and theirs alone.

Every individual who has been born of Spirit is called a child of Abraham for a reason: every one will be as Ishmael was, who was not circumcised until after he reached puberty, or as Isaac was, born of promise and circumcised on the eighth day. The promise isn't to all of Abraham's seed. It is made to those who will by faith enter God's rest, who do not believe that the giant of obedience to the laws of God is too large to defeat. The promise is to those disciples who become Judeans when still geographically living in distant lands.

* * *

December 16, 2004

Commentary — From the Margins *The Problem with Prophecy*

The problem with biblical prophecy isn't that it is difficult to understand or that it has been sealed and secret until the time of the end. The problem is what these prophecies

reveal. Just as Jesus, the first of the firstfruits, was consigned to death so that humanity might live, all of the firstfruits have been consigned to death during the first half of seven years of tribulation. The Evangelical Church will not be bodily raptured to heaven, nor will the Sabbath-observing Church of God go to a physical place of safety other than the grave. Disciples who cling to the prophetic teachings of Herbert Armstrong will not go to Petra. They will die; their blood will be shed to redeem the other half of humanity. They will either save their spiritual lives by holding fast to the laws of God, especially the Sabbath commandment, or they will lose their spiritual lives by trying to save their physical lives. The choice will be theirs alone; their choice will be made when obedience, by faith, to the laws of God will be their only covering for sin. They will have the power to physically execute whatever their secret thoughts are. If those thoughts are to obey God regardless of the cost, they will have the power, through faith, to go to the grave when necessary as they submit their will to the Father's. If those secret imaginations are, however, contrary to the laws of God, those imaginations will be acted upon and will be made visible for everyone to see.

The Tribulation is the hard labor pains of the last Eve giving birth to many sons of God: to a spiritual Cain first, then to a spiritual Abel, and finally to a spiritual Seth after Cain kills righteous Abel. Seth's birth occurs when the Holy Spirit is poured out on all flesh halfway through the seven years of tribulation. Then, even the natures of the great predators will change. The lion will lie down with the lamb. Satan, that old dragon who has, as the prince of the power of the air, deceived the world, will be cast from heaven and given the mind of a man. He will come as the true antiChrist; he will come claiming to be the Messiah; and he will come during the fall high day season (for the northern hemisphere), exactly when Herbert Armstrong taught that Christ would return. Armstrong's remaining disciples have been set up to worship Satan as the returned Christ.

The problem with prophecy is in personally knowing sincere men and women who have swallowed the prophetic teachings of Herbert Armstrong, or of Ellen G. White. These devout Christians do not believe what they have accepted as truth for decades is wrong and devoid of all prophetic understanding. Their redemption lies in them clinging to the Sabbath. Perhaps that will be enough. But a hundred thousand of Armstrong's Sabbath-observing disciples have disappeared into organizations that attempt to enter God's rest on the following day, just as the Congregation in the Wilderness attempted to enter God's rest (Ps 95:10–11) on the following day. All of the circumcised nation that left Egyptian bondage, except for Joshua and Caleb, died in the wilderness and did not enter God's rest. All of the spiritually circumcised nation that left sin, with the exception of the seven named churches (Joshua) and single congregations of every denomination (Caleb), will also die spiritually in the wilderness of sin. They will not enter God's rest. Instead, 2300 days before Christ returns, they will rebel against God through refusing to live by the laws of God. A great delusion will be sent over them so that they cannot repent. And they will wander in the wilderness of sin until they die physically. They died spiritually when they refused to live by the Sabbath commandment.

Through the observance of the Sabbath, the broken-off natural branches of Israel will be grafted upon the root of righteousness, Christ Jesus. These grafted natural branches will form righteous Abel—and Cain, their older brother, will slay them. So the prophecy pundits that look for eighth-day Christianity to "convert" the Jews of Israel and of the world will see conversion by the sword as Islam accepts the teachings of the false prophet, thereby converting en masse to Arian Christian denominations. (Muslims will never accept Trinitarian Christianity, and as Arian Christians will fight against Trinitarian denominations.)

Muslims will convert to primary a single Arian denomination because of what happened the night of the second Passover, the event that begins the seven endtime years of tribulation—Muslims firstborns, not under the blood of the Lamb, died when Israel was liberated from indwelling sin and death. The deaths of Muslim firstborns coupled with the coming of the false prophet will initiate mass conversion.

Again, the problem with prophecy is in knowing that there is nothing I can say to convert eighth-day-observing family members and relatives who already believe that they are saved and that they will go to heaven. There is no argument I can write that will convert anyone. Jesus said to those who do not keep the law of God when it is near to them that if they will not hear Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced by one raised from the dead (Luke 16:31); that if they do not believe Moses' writings they will not believe His words (John 5:46-47).

Moses has been read in every city since antiquity—and eighth day Christianity has vilified those who teach disciples to keep the laws of God, especially the Sabbath. These spiritually circumcised descendants of Abraham who attempt to enter God's rest on the following day have adopted Hagar as their mother; they have married Egyptian women. And they remain in bondage to lawlessness while professing liberty from the law. They have been truly deceived by that old dragon who will come as the antiChrist when cast from heaven halfway through seven years of tribulation.

What can I say to a born-again friend such as Chuck Carlson, or even to my sister Caroleah Johnson that might convince them to believe Moses and the Prophets, and to start living as Judeans? Jesus said that if they won't hear Moses they won't be convinced by even Him. And that has proven true throughout the centuries.

The problem with prophecy today is the same problem Jeremiah had, the same problem Ezekiel had: the holy nation of God doesn't want to hear either Moses or the Prophets. This nation wants to hear prophecies about physical blessings and about physical safety for long-practiced disobedience. It refuses correction, refuses to love righteousness more than its own lusts. It will not worship the God who gave circumcised Israel statutes that were not good and rules by which that nation could not have life (Ezek 20:25) because Israel rejected His statutes and profaned His Sabbaths. This same God will send a great delusion over eighth day Christianity so that spiritually holy nation cannot repent from rejecting His statutes and profaning of His Sabbaths.

Eighth day Christianity has voluntarily consigned itself to the cross; i.e., to death. And once the Tribulation begins, this fourth beast, the fourth horseman (Death) will completely devour every person who attempts to enter God's rest on the following day. So the choice is yours. Hear Moses, hear the words of Jesus, and believe the One who sent both prophets, or perish in the lake of fire. As for me, I choose to hear and to believe. I have chosen life.

* * *

December 20, 2004

Commentary – From the Margins *'Twas the Night before Christmas*

And all through the houses of Israel, not a stirring of righteousness was hung on the tree where the bobbles of Babylon dangled as bright mirrors of uncertainty.

The commandments of God are the mirrors that reflect the root of righteousness onto which wild olive branches have been grafted, these wild branches still bearing wild fruit as is the way of nature. These wild branches replaced the broken off natural

branches so long ago that they have forgotten why it was the natural branches were rejected. The prophet Isaiah, citing God, writes to the house of Judah, "I cannot endure iniquity [lawlessness] and solemn assembly. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them" (Isa 1:13–14). The prophet Amos, citing God, writes to the house of Israel, "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies" (Amos 5:21). So to both houses of the holy nation of Israel, God unequivocally states that He hates their Sabbaths, new moons, and appointed feast days. God doesn't hate His Sabbaths as evidenced by the Apostle Paul keeping them, and even decades later, commanding the saints at Corinth to keep the Passover as Jesus set the example. But both houses of the holy, physically circumcised nation were rejected, partially at least for coupling iniquity to the Sabbaths of God, thereby transforming God's Sabbaths into solemn assemblies that were of the people's construction.

The spiritually circumcised holy nation of God has, in a manner analogous to how the physical nation polluted the Sabbath, transformed the Sabbath of God into the busiest shopping day of the week. Then this holy nation inadvertently coupled an orgy of merchandising to the probable date for the conception of Jesus of Nazareth, thus elevating greed beyond heights to which only kings aspired in former centuries. This holy nation would now like to reclaim Christmas for Christ Jesus. It has become apparent that holly wreaths and manicured evergreen trees have replaced the root of righteousness, pruned back to mostly good intentions stored in sand and straw with the carrots and parsnips.

No argument from Holy Writ will support Jesus of Nazareth being born on or near December 25th. Rather, Jesus was born in the fall of the year, on or about the first day (the high day) of the Feast of Booths. His three and a half year ministry began thirty years later and concluded with Him being the Passover Lamb of God, a Lamb chosen appropriate to the size of the household of God. Therefore, the conclusion of a three and a half year ministry requires that ministry to begin in the fall of the year. Jesus began doing the work of a priest at the age when a Levite could do temple service; He began doing the work of a priest in the fall of the year. So working backwards, a nine-month gestation would place Jesus' conception near the winter solstice, when the sun that cloaks the holy nation of God (Rev 12:1) makes its return. (This is not said to advocate or justify sun worship, an abomination borrowed from Gentiles by the circumcised nation of Israel.) And Dr. E. W. Bullinger's scholarship seems to support this simple argument for Jesus being born during the Feast of Booths.

Therefore, since there is no placement of a Sabbath of God on or near the winter solstice, and since there is an annual solemn assembly (the Wave Sheaf Offering) placed on the day of Jesus' Ascension, the justifiable conclusion can be drawn that God doesn't intend for Israel to celebrate Jesus' conception, but rather, intends that Israel celebrates Jesus' Ascension. Christmas is, then, a celebration of the spiritually circumcised nation of God that benefits Wal-Mart more than it honors Christ Jesus. As such, it has become one of our solemn assemblies that God hates.

A disciple can choose to keep Christmas, and to minimize the disciple's participation in the merchandising of Christ, but this disciple walks a very narrow line that allows for no missteps. And missteps will occur, for the holiday is not of God but of man. Parents will teach children to expect gifts, not to give gifts. Because giving is expected, quantity rather than quality will decide purchases. The old fashion Christmas celebrations of German immigrants are now packaged by historical sites, ever anxious for another money-making opportunity. So good sense and spiritual wisdom will have disciples shunning all celebration of Christmas; for on this day, spiritual Babylon has transformed

God into a gift-wrapped commodity placed beneath an artificially lit tree. God certainly has cause to hate this solemn assembly of spiritual Israel.

* * *

December 22, 2004

Commentary – From the Margins *The Best of Times*

When in first and second grades (before leaving Indiana for Oregon), I heard adult aunts and uncles say that my grandfather had copies of newspapers in which my dad's war letters were printed. Dad died in the middle of my fifth grade year, so as an adult myself, I never knew Dad, never heard his thoughts about politics, or prosperity, or the poverty of the Depression. He graduated from Petroleum High, Petroleum, Indiana, in 1932. For a graduation present, Grandpa gave him what appeared in the one photo that was preserved to be a five-ton truck. With it, Dad earned a living through the hard years of the Depression. He was drafted in that first lottery call-up spring 1941, and he spent the war driving truck: 3rd Division, 15th Infantry, C Company.

During the Depression, Dad hauled grain and hay from northern Indiana down into the South, where he cross-loaded logs and hauled them back to a little sawmill. I don't know how prosperous Dad's trucking business was. There wasn't a lot of money in circulation, so his business was probably cash strapped, evidenced by him driving school bus one winter and bucking feed sacks another winter. During the 1930s, times were tough for farmers and those employed on the fringes of farming, a solace to which I could turn when I found myself in tough conditions logging on Alaska's Kenai Peninsula, or fishing a too-small boat out of Dutch Harbor.

In 1997, at a Kizer family reunion, I finally encountered my dad's thoughts on politics and prosperity. My uncle gave me a copy of the Wednesday, August 11, 1943, edition of the *Bluffton News-Banner* (Bluffton, Indiana) in which was an excerpted [letter](#) from Dad to the newspaper.

Dad writes,

I guess everyone has heard of Sicily. Many times I've read articles about the beautiful island and the many races of people and old buildings there.

Quite some time ago I wrote a letter from North Africa. Since then We [sic] have come a long way and a lot has happened. The road has been hard and rough and at times very discouraging. But the farther we go, we realize more and more what we are doing over here and what it would mean if things were the same in the good old United States.

We might think things are tough in the States, and that we are being mistreated, and at times falsely led, but until one sees the once well-to-do people on the streets begging for food, because they have had nothing to eat for days, then, and then only, can we realize just how fortunate we of the United States are. Can any one of you, with a good home and substantial income, picture yourself standing on the street in ragged clothes asking someone for a slice of bread or can of beans, or maybe a can of milk for a baby?

The pace of American life today truly doesn't allow those who have good homes and substantial incomes time to reflect upon what it would be like to beg. Dad's question presupposes a changed status, the transition from prosperity to extreme poverty. As such, it remains a valid question. Can anyone who has never done without really imagine having nothing? If the biblically prophesied period commonly identified as the

Tribulation is close at hand, the argument behind my theological writings, then the face of poverty will become the face in every disciple's mirror. Christians will not be bodily raptured to heaven. Within greater Christianity, only the LDS Church has actively made provisions for a social upheaval. And then, their plans will have them leveraging food into discipleship, thereby causing spiritually circumcised descendants of Abraham to become descendants of Esau rather than of Israel.

Continuing with Dad's letter,

Yes, these people have lived on little or nothing for years, but never have they lost courage or faith in God that some day someone would come to their aid. Of course it is true that we of America are of a different world and that in practically no way are we dependent on these people of Sicily, but after all, they are human too and we are giving them the chance to live again. When one sees the confidence and faith and hope these people have in America, you realize that we are living in the best place in the world.

A second or a third year into the Tribulation, will it be said of Americans that these people have lived on little or nothing for years, but never have they lost courage or faith in God? Or will those disciples who today sincerely believe that they will be raptured to heaven lose faith in God when loved ones perish from hunger? Will they have the courage to walk uprightly before God when they have no covering for their spiritual nakedness but their obedience to God? Or will they, because of unbelief that turns to disobedience, attempt to enter God's rest on the following day? Prophecy has the greater Church rebelling against God 2300 days before Christ returns. And because those rebelling Christians didn't love righteousness and the truth enough to walk uprightly before God, a great delusion will be sent over them so that they cannot repent. They will sincerely believe that they serve God when they kill genuine disciples. But they will be spiritually condemned with no hope of a reprieve, for God will have consigned them to the cross and the lake of fire.

During this holiday season, as the last few shopping days before Christmas quickly pass, America experiences prosperity beyond anything Dad could imagine. The gulf between the people of WW2 Sicily and 21st-Century Americans is almost too great to be imagined. Yet the promise encompassed in the Tribulation is that no time in the past will be as difficult as will be those seven years. And the legitimate question must be asked: How can that be and humanity still survive? The prophet Isaiah writes,

Behold, the Lord will empty the earth and make it desolate, and he will twist its surface and scatter its inhabitants...The Earth shall be utterly empty and utterly plundered; for the Lord has spoken this word. The earth mourns and withers; the world languishes and withers; the highest people of the earth languish. The earth lies defiled under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few men are left. (Isa 24:1, 3-6 ESV)

The prophecy is that few men will survive. The promise of Christ Jesus is that all who endure to the end shall be saved (Matt 24:13). So between a few and all who endure is keeping courage and not losing faith in God, a difficult task for an Evangelical Christian who expects to be raptured before the Tribulation begins. The last Eve, however, will not miss her hard labor pains of bringing many sons of God to glory. Again, the Church will not be bodily raptured to heaven, nor will it go to a place of physical safety. To teach otherwise is to teach falsely, to teach as one who has not been sent by God.

Dad writes,

We on the fighting front have no complaints whatever, and we are proud that we can depend on you people at home for the supplies that keep us living and in

good health. All we want is to see the end of all this and get back home to live a normal free life. We realize the road is going to be long and bitter, and that some of us may go to the world of lasting peace before we reach the end.

The firstfruits of God, with the exception of a spiritual Joshua and a spiritual Caleb, have been consigned to death, with Christ Jesus as the first of the firstfruits sacrificed as the paschal Lamb of God. For the road from mortality to immortality is long and bitter, and some of us will go to the world of lasting peace before humanity arrives at that moment in time when Christ returns, and judgments are revealed. The world of lasting peace isn't heaven, but the timelessness of the grave, where the dead know nothing until their change comes.

The disciple who is unwilling to lay down his or her life for Christ Jesus is unworthy of salvation. The disciple who believes that God will not require as much from him or her as those formerly well-to-do Sicilians endured will sell the person's birthright for bread and a bowl of lentils, will make him or herself a spiritual son of Esau, whom God hated (Rom 9:13). The disciple who tries to enter God's rest on the following day will have returned to lawlessness or disobedience or sin, all words that mean the person has missed the mark of righteousness. And when the Son of Man is revealed (Luke 17:26-30), the Body of Christ will have to cover its nakedness with its obedience to God. There will be no other covering for sin for those disciples who were not covering their nakedness with the blood of the paschal Lamb of God. Taking communion however and whenever a person wishes is to offer sacrifice as Cain did, placing before God the fruit of the ground (bread and wine or grape juice or water). And as God tells Cain, the person will be accepted if the person does right, or practices righteousness (Gen 4:7). But sin lurks at this person's door. Unless a person covers sin with the Passover Blood of Christ, taken as Jesus established the [example](#), sin will continue to lurk at the disciple's door.

The problem with prophecy is what is revealed: the firstborn son of God will be sacrificed as the ransom for humanity's liberation from sin and death. Jesus of Nazareth as the first of the firstfruits already sits at the right hand of the Father. He died on the cross so that a last Eve could be created, and this last Eve will give birth to the remaining disciples who must be sacrificed as those were who wait under the altar. This last Eve will give birth to three sons. When the Tribulation begins, she will bring forth a spiritual Cain who will try to enter God's rest on the following day and who will slay his righteous brother, a spiritual Abel. Then halfway through those seven years of tribulation, this last Eve will give birth to a third son, a spiritual Seth who will be accepted, who only has to endure to the end to be saved (Matt 24:13). The news of this third spiritual son's birth is the good news that must be proclaimed to all the world as a witness to all nations before the end of the age comes (v. 14). The first two sons die, one spiritually, one physically. And every disciple today has the freewill to determine his or her spiritual mother, has the freewill to determine if he or she will descend from Cain or Abel. Disciples are not greater than their Master (Teacher). And if disciples do not have more courage and more faith than formerly well-to-do Sicilians who were reduced to begging, then these disciples will in no way endure to the end.

* * *

To contact the author: homer@homerkizer.org

Return to [Home Page](#)