

Rereading Prophecy
or
Fishing in Fished-Out Waters

By
Homer Kizer

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Preface

More than forty years ago, a Seventh Day Adventist minister gave me a book that allegedly unraveled the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. I was then a twelve year old Freshman in high school, and if there were ever a subject more capable of tangling thoughts, I don't know what the subject would be. At the time I was fishing salmon with a True Temper baitcasting reel, and for all of the backlashes I had to patiently untangle after poor casts, I never encountered anything as confused or confusing as that book. I lost interest in it and in the subject. I was perfectly content knowing that someone else understood the prophecies; I didn't need to waste time or brain capacity keeping track of which beast went where and did what, or if this little horn was the same as that one.

Between then and now, I read *Future Shock* and *The Late Great Planet Earth*. I found that the experts were as wrong as they were right. The future is always farther away than we have thought. Not as much technological progress is made as was expected even though that progress has been spectacular. Buck Rogers' gadgets might exist, but we haven't yet developed the need for them. Rather, we creep forward in unexpected directions, conceiving today what was inconceivable yesterday. The future isn't the industrial or even psychological horizon ahead of us. It is a circling back upon ourselves as if we were climbing our own DNA molecule, a helix that better resembles a stretched coil spring than the turnpike across Ohio.

I read enough history to know that it had been poorly taught to me even though I had been a good student. I read until I found myself building muzzleloading rifles full time, mingling historic crafts with the cash economy. And when the ancient feud between Isaac and Ishmael disrupted cash flow in 1973, I moved North, where I spent time fishing commercially in the Aleutians. While waiting out a blow at Dutch Harbor in 1979, I read Ken Follett's novel *Triple*. His novel was inspiration for me to start writing. Actually, I threw the novel across the wheelhouse and said, *I can tell a better story than that!* I still believe I can although I don't know that I ever will. Regardless, I started writing. I figured I could write a novel in six months. A year and a half later, I finally completed *Shelikof*. Another three and a half years passed before I received a contract for it.

It is difficult to take oneself seriously as a writer when rejection slips outnumber publications by hundreds, if not thousands. I became a respected sculptor. And though I took and still take my work seriously, I quit taking myself so a long time ago. I can be wrong in whatever I do. That possibility doesn't upset me; it is a fact of life.

Of necessity, I have used some linguistic jargon, language borrowed from the Greeks. I have tried to explain the nuances of each term, and explain a little about how language works. I suspect what I have actually accomplished is to

frustrate everyone . . . I was once asked, *How come papers presented at academic conferences make sense, except for the ones from English departments?* I was teaching Formline woodcarving to Native students in University of Alaska Fairbanks' Native Arts studio at the time, so I shrugged my shoulders and continued adzing a fish bowl from a block of green birch. A gallery was waiting for the bowl. No one was particularly interested in anything I had to say. So it made no difference whether I asked or answered the question, *Is communication really possible?*

Biblical prophecy has been a fished-out subject. What could be said was giggered or gaffed long ago, leaving those of us arriving late to cast our lines into sterile waters. That is, what could be said had been until history arrived at that generic period known as the time of the end. My argument is we entered that period in January 2002. The case for my argument is the text of this book, and the prophetic understanding that overturns all previous readings of Daniel and Revelation.

On the following pages I have tried to keep my tone respectful but light, while taking exception with the biblical *watchmen* who have God bringing national captivity upon the latter day descendants of the ancient houses of Israel. My instincts are to write, *There is really nothing I can do to affect a prophesied event*, but that's not true. If I can cause some readers to reread and rethink the biblical text, then perhaps some of them will seek God, believe Him unto obedience, and enter into the covenant relationship they now think they have with Him. If my reading causes someone to spend time in the text to prove me right or wrong, his or her time will be well spent.

Throughout my rereading, I refer to reader communities, the terminology borrowed from Stanley Fish. I don't like the fact that readers assign meaning to texts. When I began writing, I wanted to control even the tempo at which a reader read my compositions. I wasn't very trusting of readers. They would get what I wanted to say wrong. Yes, they would, and they have. Sometimes in *getting it wrong*, though, they have added meanings I wasn't capable of conceiving. Yet to them, the meaning was right there in the text.

The slippery nature of language makes prophecy exceedingly difficult to grasp. The tighter one squeezes, the farther away meaning flounders. The more dogmatic a person becomes about asserting *the real meaning* of the text, the more the person demonstrates that he or she doesn't understand how language works. Of all forms of language usage, prophecy is necessarily the most complex. But the person who is usually the local expert often knows the least about the workings of the written language.

Prophecy remains the subject that interests more people than any other. A prophecy seminar is sure to fill pews.

So why are we so curious about what will happen next year or even next month? A tabloid magazine uses the advertising slogan about inquiring minds wanting to know. The slogan is true. Our psyche is constructed in such a

manner that we desire to know secret things of all sorts. The more secret the better. Hopefully, I can titillate that desire to know. And if in doing so, a person repents of how he or she has been living and seeks God, then perhaps the Father has drawn a fish into and out of otherwise barren waters.

Are They Understandable?

A question asked by a country music song is what part of "no" don't you understand. The same can be said for the prophecies of Daniel, of Jesus, of most of the prophets: what part of "the time of the end" do you not understand? The prophecies of Daniel are secret and sealed until the time of the end. They were not given, if their mimetic language is comprehensible, as a historical roadmap of even major events between Daniel's stay in Babylon and the coming of the Messiah in all of His glory. They are not understandable until "the time of the end." If today is not a part of that period, they are still not understandable. What I will write might be useful as a linguistic primer, but I might be as wrong as my predecessors.

The argument of this book is that the prophecies of Daniel are now understandable. You will decide the truth of my argument as you assign meaning to the prophetic texts, and that is what readers do: readers assign meaning to both words and their accumulation; i.e., the text.

Returning to my initial sentence, the word "no" has parts. There is first its sound, or sound image, usually called its *icon* or *signifier*. Then there is the thing identified by the sound image: in the case of "no," the thing is the simple negation of another noun or verb. That "negation" becomes the word's *object* or *signified*. In the French philosophical paradigm, a word consists of only its signifier and its signified, the assignment of one to the other being arbitrary, with only a cultural trace linking the word's two parts. In the Prague paradigm with its adoption of the philosophy of the American Charles Peirce, a word consists of its icon, its object, and an element of thirdness, or its interpretant, which unites icon and object in a three part diagram if one were to draw the relationships.

The word "no" can be used as an adverb, as an adjective, and as a noun. As a noun, it will be used metaphorically and/or metonymically when a parent tells a child, "That's a 'No' [or 'no-no']!" As a metaphor, *No* becomes the object for which the child reaches. In its metonymic usage, *No* represents the entire action of touching or playing with a prohibited object. And this distinction between metaphor and metonymy becomes crucial when dealing with complex language.

Words are used mimetically, metaphorically, or metonymically, all three uses described in Greek philosophy, with all that is real in heaven with the gods and with everything here on earth being only manifestations of the "reality" of the gods. Thus, a table on which Plato ate dinner wasn't a "real" table—the real table was in heaven—but a representation of the real table. A painting of a table then becomes a representation of a representation. In describing the painting, that oral or inscribed description becomes an additional level of representation. Thus, language is always distant from reality, that distance assigned a descriptive term. So the same linguistic icon (i.e., combination of

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letters) can have several differing objects depending on how far away the icon is from reality. This makes for differing readings of the same text within the same reader community. And I realize I am oversimplifying the concept. For my purpose, however, simplification has become desirable as I attempt to distill clarity from the linguistic muck that has been tracked through two millennia of biblical exegesis.

Mimetic word usage is treating words like the table on which Plato ate: when the purpose of one's word usage is to mimic tangible things or actions—to convey the sense of a thing or a deed through the detailed description of the thing or of the deed—then one's words are said to be *mimetic*. Words become imitators of reality. At best, that is all words can be although some postmodernists have played with words being the ultimate reality in self-aware metatexts.

The description of the tabernacle in the wilderness is the application of mimetic word usage to the construction of the tabernacle, and as such, close to Plato's use of *mimesis*. However, the tabernacle became a physical imitation of the heavenly throne, and as such a metaphor of the reality of God's throne in heaven, for nothing inside the creation will be the same as those things which are outside of the creation, or in spatial-time dimensions beyond our four.

When God was asked who He is, His response, "I AM," is mimetic; for the two words, *I AM*, are an attempt to imitate "existence" or "timeless existence" through language. But God's response *I AM* is also metaphoric: as most everyone was taught in school, a metaphor is where one thing is named another thing, usually done to reveal meaning by describing the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar. The usage can also be employed to conceal meaning, as was done by Nathan when he confronted King David over David's affair with Bathsheba. The rich man of Nathan's parable was David, and David didn't recognize himself until after he had rendered his judgment that the rich man deserved death. Thus, *I AM* becomes, by metaphor, a substitute name for God, one not too sacred to pronounce.

Metaphors are routinely employed to give names associated with things inside the creation to things that exist outside the creation, especially where no exact counterparts exist. Unlike divinely inspired renaming of individuals to reflect attributes of the individuals (hence, the mimetic application of naming), Satan has no direct physical counterpart. Thus, Satan becomes the devil, the old dragon, the Adversary. Even the name "Satan" is a metaphor.

The same situation applies concerning the Holy *Pneuma*, or Breath. It is by metaphor called the Comforter, or the Advocate by Jesus. But that is attaching a metaphor to a metaphor; for we have assigned it the metaphoric icons of the Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit. Even the Holy Breath, the most direct translation of *Pneuma* is metaphoric, and not a mimetic representation of God's creative power or force. The icon is perhaps as close as we can come to mimetic language; for we can do a little creative work with our breath, and by extension,

we can speak things into existence by directing the work of others. Our breath is our life force. Breath doesn't convey personhood, nor should the icon used to translate *Pneuma* convey personhood. The person making love to the Holy *Pneuma* is messing around with a familiar spirit.

Prophecy, though, has usually been understood to be metonymic word usage, where a winged lion stands for Babylon, or a leopard for the armies of Alexander the Great: metonymical language is word usage in which an idea is evoked or described by the usage of an associated term. Babylon has more to it than just being a winged lion. There isn't a direct one thing is another thing correspondence. Rather, a winged lion is a symbol which evokes all of the associations that can be made with Babylon.

In mimetical word usage, the icon phrase *a winged lion* would represent a real winged lion, which isn't a creature many big game hunters have added to their trophy walls. Because we haven't seen many winged lions roaming around in the wild, we dismiss any mimetical usage of the icon phrase. At a subconscious level, we understand that language is being used figuratively, or better, in a more distance level of representation than to mimic reality as closely as possible.

In metaphorical usage, *a winged lion* could represent a person, such as King Nebuchadnezzar or the Shah of Iran. It would be a single entity standing in for another single entity. Again, a metaphor is one thing being named another thing in a one-to-one correspondence, whereas in metonymical usage, *a winged lion* might represent the Babylon Empire or a Babylonish system, or the nation of Iran, or Britain, or any larger entity, such as in the phrase "the White House said blah, blah, blah" where the White House represents the Executive Branch of the U.S. Federal Government. Buildings don't speak in our reality, so we don't consider the possibility of mimetic usage.

In metonymical word usage, an attribute of "the whole" is used to name "the whole," such as Paul does when he uses the icon phrase "the law" (Rom 7:6) — that part of the Sinai covenant spoken by God — for the entirety of the old covenant, whereas Paul's use of "the old written code" (also Rom 7:6) becomes a metaphor for the first covenant. Thus, readers have to be especially careful with Paul's use of the icon phrase "the law," for he uses the phrase mimetically, metaphorically, and metonymically. Context usually clarifies the level of representation Paul intends for the phrase, but often the level of representation Paul apparently intended conflicts with how the passage has traditionally been read. Thus, debate over "words" can occur when it shouldn't (2 Tim 2:14), since every reading community assigns its own objects to the linguistic icons. This means that each reading community determines by its traditions which level of representation Paul intended for the phrase in whatever context. The biblical text is left without any absolute meaning, which is what any literary critic worth her salt will tell you. The icons can arguably be infallible; the text is not and cannot be. A person proclaims his or her

ignorance by stating otherwise, the reason why debate over words is prohibited by Paul, whose words are the ones most debated about. Serious biblical scholars should agree that Jesus taught disciples to keep the law (Matt 5:19), but Peter says of Paul's teaching that "the ignorant and unstable twist [them] to their own destruction" (2 Pet 3:16). Why they do this is that *the ignorant* are poor readers and are unable to discern levels of figurative language representation. For too many of them, "the law" means "the law," when context will determine whether it means the commandments spoken by God, the Sinai covenant, the entire old covenant (both the Sinai and the Moab covenants), or all of the covenants that come forward from Abram (from before his name was changed). Likewise for these ignorant readers (Peter's words), "the law of Moses" means "the law of Moses," when all of the above are at play, plus the Pharisaic traditions that had been added to the old covenant after the remnant of the house of Judah returned from Babylon.

The difference between metaphorical usage and metonymical usage is about as great as the difference between the two words. This difference becomes important, though, when assigning meaning to an icon phrase—I cannot stress this too much, words have only the meaning a reader or a reading community assigns to them. They do not carry their meaning with them (except as the weak link of thirdness provides, or as cultural traces allow). Dictionaries are relatively modern inventions, with their roots in late 17th and early 18th-Centuries' neoclassic attempts to "fix" the language [*fix* used in the sense of fastening a thing down so the thing cannot move]. Dictionaries for difficult words had been available for a couple of centuries, but Dr. Johnson's 1755 publication was the first for common words. And dictionaries are acknowledgments that words carry no meaning of themselves within themselves, for a dictionary is the record of how a word has been used in the past. A dictionary is a recording of some words' cultural traces, or of some words' elements of thirdness.

The great debate among prophecy scholars has been about the assignment of a historical event to a prophetic event bearing the linguistic marker "at the time of the end." Should the prophecy be read as being fulfilled by the historic event, or is a future event the fulfillment of the prophetic icon phrase? Herbert Armstrong entered this debate and said, Yes, both; prophecies have *type* and *antitype* fulfillments. The popularity of his prophetic teachings has since caused many theologically unrelated scholars to expound his type and antitype paradigm. However, usually both the type and antitype fulfillments have been metonymical assignments of events and future events to the prophecies.

I should also mention that (and warn against) assigning a prophetic event to a nation not mentioned in the biblical text. The introduction of an unnamed nation is adding to the text. In the case of the Book of Revelation, this "adding to" is strictly prohibited (Rev 22:18). Thus, the person who introduces the Roman Empire into biblical prophecy (the Roman Empire is nowhere

mentioned in endtime prophecy) has taken upon him or herself the plagues described in the Book of Revelation. This should scare the *watchmen* who loudly proclaim that a resurrected Roman Empire will attack America, but these *watchmen* have so little prophetic understanding that they don't know enough to be scared. Therefore, I will, because my opinion here is trustworthy, add them to Peter's list of ignorant and unstable readers of the Bible.

In the type and antitype paradigm, prophetic events have an earlier and a later fulfillment; thus, a prophecy about the house of Israel going into captivity will pertain to both the nation at Samaria and to the modern descendants of the scattered house of Israel. Such a prophecy is understood to be metonymic. The phrase *house of Israel* represents the nation that includes ten tribes of the Israelite peoples who have descended from the patriarch Jacob, or Israel, after his name was changed.

However, one major problem exists: as with Paul's use of the icon phrase "the law," God uses the phrase "the house of Israel" for the *polis* of Jerusalem (Ezek 12:24, 27 among other passages), and He uses the phrase for that portion of the house of Judah that had gone into captivity at Babylon (Ezek 12:9). In addition, God also uses the phrase for the descendants of the ancient house of Israel (the northern kingdom of Samaria). Consider the following two uses by God for the same icon phrase: "Thus says the Lord God: This oracle concerns the prince in Jerusalem and *all the house of Israel in it*" (Ezek 12:10), as compared to "The word of the Lord came to me: Mortal, take a stick and write on it, 'For Judah, and the Israelites associated with it'; then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph (the stick of Ephraim) and *all the house of Israel associated with it*" (Ezek 37:15–16). God's uses of the icon phrase lack the precision the biblical *watchmen* ascribe to the phrase. Context, not the phrase, must be relied upon to determine the linguistic referent identified by the phrase, which God uses mimetically, metaphorically, and metonymically.

To say that a phrase is used metaphorically is somewhat problematic because of the cultural imprecision with which the icon "metaphor" has been used. In other words, we use the icon *metaphoric* with the same varying levels of representation that Paul uses *the law* and God uses *the house of Israel*. And if all of this seems confusing, it is, as evidenced by the dozens of readings every biblical passage supports today.

Returning to the icon phrase *the house of Israel*, in its expanded application, it can mean the Samaritan nation of Israel that fell in 721 B.C., and earlier. But the peoples of the tribe of Dan weren't a part of that nation, and those peoples are included within the ten tribes that rebelled against Rehoboam following Solomon's death. Plus, because of the long drought during King Ahab's reign, tens of thousands of Israelites had migrated both east and west of Samaria. So a difference exists even between the expanded metaphoric application of the phrase *house of Israel* and its metonymic application to all peoples of Israelite descent. So in the case of this icon phrase, it can be said that metaphorically

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the *house of Israel* means the northern kingdom of Israel, while metonymically the phrase means all of both the house of Israel and the house of Judah. This latter distinction is one that most scholars and historians of the modern nation of Israel don't fully appreciate; for some prophecies in which the phrase *the house of Israel* is used are about all the tribes, while some are about the descendants of the northern kingdom. And where this distinction is most evident is in prophecies about the return of *the house of Israel* to the glorious land: those prophecies are not about the return of scattered Jews to modern day Israel, which is the gathering of the house of Judah and for which another set of prophetic icon phrases exists.

Let's pause for a moment to let a little air into my text, so that my words can breathe: less educated readers tend to encounter a phrase (any phrase) and believe that everytime they encounter the same phrase, the referents are the same. This is akin to them encountering a pronoun (say, *they*) and believing that the pronoun represents the same antecedent everytime it is encountered. That makes no sense at all. Yet, they will do the same thing for an icon phrase that is itself like a pronoun in that it stands as a substitute for a reality at a level of linguistic representation only one, two, or three degrees greater than a common pronoun.

If I'm still not making sense, write the letters "C" "O" "W" on a piece of paper and try to get milk from the letter combination, or icon. Obviously, you can't. The icon represents a female bovine in our usage. When we encounter this icon in a piece of reading, we must determine whether the icon actually represents a female bovine (the mimetic usage), or whether it represents a person who possesses cow-like qualities (the metaphoric usage), or whether it represents something else, such as in the expression, *The cows all came home*, where what could have come home is children, or politicians, or wealth (the metonymic usages). So a "cow" doesn't necessarily mean "a cow." And in every usage, the icon "cow" first stands as a substitute for that cud-chewing animal out there in the field. Thus, when we encounter the icon, we have not encountered the reality of the thing. And this inherent problem of language (of assigning objects to icons) prohibits infallibility, since tradition and by extension culture determines what constitutes the text, as the icons of the text stand between us and God. Inspired doesn't mean infallible: "inspired" is the global condition in which the text was produced, while "infallible" is the state in which the text is received. Paul was inspired to write, "Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess 4:17). Paul clearly believes he will be alive when Christ returns. The context is, "For the Lord himself . . . will descend from heaven and the dead in Christ will rise first" (verse 16). But Paul is now among the dead in Christ; he is not alive. If the text is infallible, we will have to twist these words to our own destruction to have them make any kind of sense. Luckily, the text is merely inspired: Paul's order of resurrection is correct, the

dead first, then the living, but Paul isn't still left here with us, which he would have to be for the text to be infallible.

Meaning for any icon phrase can only be assigned in relation to context, and then that assignment is by tradition. A person can appear foolish pretty fast by saying something to the effect that prophetically *the house of Israel* means the United States and Britain. In the Church of God, we should be smarter than that, but apparently we haven't been, which is probably why I've been drafted to do this job of rereading biblical prophecy.

So our assignment of linguistic objects to icons is either mimetic, metaphoric, or metonymic. When this is coupled to the arbitrary nature of initial assignments of objects to icons, words can mean whatever a person wants them to mean. No word has a definitive meaning. No text has a definitive reading. Rather, meaning is assigned to a text by a reading community. Within the scope of language, every text will support more than one reading, but will not support every reading because of Peirce's element of thirdness, or Derrida's cultural traces.

Someone will argue that words really have meaning, that I am trampling on the very Word of God when I insist that readers assign meaning to words, when I insist that words have no meaning of their own. My answer to my critic is, simply, tell me what a "malix" is; I harvested one again last year. It is an icon we regularly used on the portion of the Oregon Coast where I reached maturity. We assigned an object to the icon to conceal the object from Outsiders, especially grade school teachers during show & tell. The strategy was informal, never verbalized, but widespread and effective until the code was revealed to these Outsiders. By that time, enough of us had emigrated to Alaska that the icon didn't need continued employment. Instead, the icon "Outside" was applied to everywhere beyond Alaskan borders, which brings me to another example: at a glance, can you tell a *dog* from a *pink*?

Augustine spent far too much energy trying to explain *signs* without enough understanding of the subject to fully grasp the vanity of his endeavor. Likewise, biblical scholars ever since have spent too much energy trying to fracture a code for which the linguistic objects for the icons have been concealed. The icons exist for everyone to read; the objects and the thirdness that unites objects to icons have restricted access, that access limited to only those individuals who have been drawn by the Father, and limited to a certain time period for even those individuals.

If we have entered the period known as *the time of the end*, then the limitation of "when" objects can be validly assigned to the linguistic icons has been lifted. These icons have produced more confusion, more contortion of logic than anything else for two millennia. But if this is the time of the end, then I should be able to assign objects to these prophetic passages that are now somewhat reflective of the mind of God; for the other limitation is upon who can understand the prophecies, or by extension, who can do the assigning of

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objects. The "who" in Daniel's language are the holy ones; so we shouldn't look to Satan or his agents to reveal the "meaning" of Daniel's prophecies.

I use "meaning" for the pairing of divinely inspired linguistic objects to the public icons. As in the case of Poe's "Purloined Letter," God hid His messages to the saints by placing those messages in the most public of places after first separating their sound images from the "things" those images should represent. This is a convoluted way of explaining why reader communities exist, only one of which comprises the saints or holy ones. Someone not in that community can examine the public icons, can for him or herself assign meaning to the text, then can teach as an expert but be absolutely clueless as to what meaning God intends for the saints to take from the same text. Sometimes this person can, through his or her own intellect, come close to the divinely inspired objects. But every sustained reading of the text by someone not in the community of saints will deviate from the divinely inspired reading even though the person can pronounce the icons far better than can every saint.

The pronunciation of the public icons is not a test of inspiration. Believing that God exists is not a test; neither are miracles even to casting out demons and raising the dead. Rather, the test is in how a person reads Scripture, with the sheep knowing the voice of the Shepherd, and the Shepherd knowing His sheep.

The circular nature of exclusionary reader communities and the reasoning that produces them tends to cause the Church of God to focus upon itself, with two tendencies emerging. The first tendency is to deify the teachings of a man, to make an idol of the man, that man the most visible face of the Church of God during the 20th-Century. The other tendency of disciples is the application of the Oedipus complex and the psychological murder of their spiritual father, the same man others have begun deifying. Both of these tendencies can be seen in essays and advertising in *The Journal*. Both are natural responses to larger-than-life caricatures of a person, and both need to be resisted, while maintaining proper respect for the accomplishments of a human being working with God.

The circular reasoning that begins with only the saints can understand Holy Script doubles back upon itself to justify letting the dead bury their dead, a use of language that is both metonymic and metaphoric, and a use that is theologically problematic even though the icon phrase has been borrowed directly from Jesus. Whom among *the dead* is the Father drawing? Which one of them have we offended by not showing the person love in a time of need? Are we really a light to the world if no one knows we exist, if no record of our love for one another and for prospective members of our community becomes self-evident? The difficulty arises from our use of language within the community of holy ones, which is a subject far from the prophecies of Daniel if it weren't for the same use of language causing us to think we understand

what we might not. Nothing spiritual can be understood without the application of love in the assignment of linguistic objects to icons.

Although the Messiah will bring a new language, a pure language when He comes, He won't arrive before the prophecies of Daniel have been fulfilled. They and other prophecies must be attacked, if this is the time of the end, with the foible of that double-lipped sword received in a flawed language and deciphered by equally flawed saints. Perhaps the flaws will cancel each other out, certainly a possibility whenever the Most High wants His will understood.

Again, so there is no mistake: my argument is that we entered the generic time of the end in January when a forty year delusion ran its course. Prophetic understanding has been given to a few since January. Hopefully, you will be among those few by the time you finish this book.

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Section One

ON THE END TABLE

Kristel's red Persian sleeps among stone chessmen,
salt-still Crusaders—
armored columns
pushed off the stone board at Armageddon.

The Prophecies of Daniel:
Mimetic? Metonymic? or Metaphoric?

1.

With the possible exception of the mark of the Beast, no naming phrase generates as much curiosity as does *the abomination of desolation*. Its reality pales all of Hollywood's ultimate bad-guy scenarios, even when those scenarios are multiplied to their tenth power. Most end time prophecies are dated by his or its emergence in Jerusalem, and more can be said about him or it than ever before.

However, before we see who the abomination of desolation is, we need to establish some prophetic groundrules: valid prophetic readings do not leave the inspired biblical text. If a scholar drags an uninspired history textbook into the Bible, the scholar has added to the biblical text despite the person's objections that he or she is only helping to clarify the prophecy. If God needed help to clarify the prophecy, He would have inspired another prophet to write that clarification through an additional vision.

An example, and perhaps the prime example of adding to the biblical text is the insertion of the Roman Empire into prophecy. Your first objection will be, how can the Roman Empire not be there? Well, it isn't. The four world-ruling empires of Nebuchadnezzar's vision are himself as Babylon, Media Persia, Greece, and the reign of the kings of the North and of the South. The four beasts that appear in the seventh chapter of Daniel are the four horns of the he-goat of the eighth chapter, with the fourth beast being the king of the North, and the third being the king of the South. In fact, the little horn isn't the pope, but Satan himself as he comes as the antitype antiChrist.

I have a great deal of work ahead of me to establish my claims, work that I will do, but before I get started, I need to say that Daniel's prophecy of the he-goat is "for the time of the end" (8:17 New Revised Standard Version used throughout). Daniel's long prophecy about the kings of the North and the South was "to remain secret and sealed until the time of the end" (12:9). And the Book of Revelation uses a literary trope that seals its revealings until the Lord's day. Yes, I know that the angel tells John, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book" (22:10), but why does he tell John not to seal the words: "for the time is near" (verse 10). The time wasn't near two millennia ago, or even seventy years ago; it is near in the day of the Lord. The book itself is the "revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place" (1:1). *Soon* isn't, again, two millennia in the future. The trope used is seeing the Lamb of God remove the seals in the Lord's day. No one earlier in history has been worthy to remove these seals, and the Lamb doesn't remove them until the internal time setting of John's vision, not when John has his vision. Thus, the Book of Revelation has been as sealed as Daniel's prophecies. If we haven't yet entered the time of the end, they are still

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sealed. The argument I make in *A Philadelphia Apologetic* is that we entered the time of the end in January 2002, forty years after an Advanced Prophecy seminar was offered at Ambassador College in which Mr. Herbert Armstrong didn't receive the input he expected.

Daniel says of Nebuchadnezzar's dream that the "dream is certain, and its interpretation trustworthy" (2:45); so we can build our prophetic understanding of history upon Daniel's interpretation as we work our way toward the *abomination that desolates*. Staying within Scripture, the givens are that Nebuchadnezzar saw a human-appearing statue that revealed the course of human affairs until God sets up His kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold. His kingdom would be superseded by one with two arms, which in turn would be superseded by one that divides into the two thighs (or loins), which would become a single kingdom or reign that is never united, but has the feature of one half mirroring the other half, even to both having five toes of married nations of strength and weakness. Thus, twenty nations are involved, ten on each foot.

Since Nebuchadnezzar is the head of gold, only three kingdoms need to be identified. Daniel tells us that the night Babylon fell, "Darius the Mede received the kingdom" (5:31), so with certainty, we can say that the kingdom that arose after Nebuchadnezzar was the Medes and Persians. Of course, secular history confirms this, but again, to drag secular history into the inspired biblical text is adding to the text. We didn't need that history book—we didn't need to leave the Book of Daniel—to go from Nebuchadnezzar as the head of gold to the Medes as the chest of silver.

In Daniel 8, we find the Medo-Persian Empire: "In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar . . . I looked up and saw a ram standing beside the river. It had two horns. Both horns were long, but one was longer than the other, and the longer came up second" (verses 1–3). The archangel Gabriel interprets the image for Daniel: "As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia" (verse 20), with the longer horn being Persia. After all, we have already seen Darius the Mede receive the kingdom, so the Medes had to rise first.

Because of who identifies the ram as Media Persia, the identification is certain and can be added to our givens. We don't have to wonder about who is represented by the silver chest and arms of Nebuchadnezzar's image. Daniel's vision supplies the identity of both arms to go with the chest of silver, and we find Gabriel interpreting the ram metaphorically rather than metonymically, which becomes important later.

Next on Nebuchadnezzar's image were the "middle and thighs of bronze" (Dan 2:32), and before we go on, again note that the thighs were bronze. The kingdom was divided here. The fourth kingdom that is to come is never united, but exists as two legs. It doesn't ever have one capital.

In Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, we learn that this third kingdom "shall rule over the whole earth" (Dan 2:39). This is important, for many so-called prophecy experts have Rome as an incarnation of Babylon ruling the whole earth. These same self-styled experts recognize Greece as the third kingdom, but they don't find Daniel's interpretation trustworthy, as they have gone outside the biblical text to retrieve Rome from secular history books, with recurring revivals of the Roman or Holy Roman Empire ruling the world. That is not what Daniel says. Nowhere in his interpretation does Daniel say that the fourth kingdom shall rule the world, and for reason. It is a divided kingdom that competes against itself. Neither leg is able to rule the world, nor the other leg. But both legs descend from the third kingdom. As such, the third kingdom continues to rule over the world even after the fourth kingdom crushes and smashes everything (verse 40). The third kingdom doesn't rule by its military might, but by its philosophical paradigms.

In Daniel's vision of the ram that is Media and Persia, he sees, "As I was watching, a male goat appeared from the west, coming across the face of the whole earth without touching the ground. The goat had a horn between its eyes. It came toward the ram with two horns . . . and it ran at it with savage force. I saw it approaching the ram. It was enraged against it and struck the ram, breaking its two horns" (Dan 8:5-7). Again the archangel Gabriel interprets: "The male goat is the king of Greece, and the great horn between its eyes is the first king" (verse 21). Note, the goat itself is the king of Greece, and the horn between its eyes is the first king, implying that there will be more than one king, that the king of Greece outlasts its horns.

The angel who brought Daniel his long vision of the exploits of the kings of the North and of the South says, "Now I must return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I am through with him, the prince of Greece will come" (Dan 10:20). This angel isn't fighting with humans, but rather with demons, or fallen angels. The king of Greece of Daniel 8 appears to be the same demon here identified as the prince of Greece, the identifying terms "king" and "prince" interchangeable as far as the object for the linguistic icons is concerned. And what we will find is that "horns" are used for two levels of representation, the first being for subordinate angels or demons, and the second being for nations controlled by angels or demons. This first level of representation can be described as metaphoric, while the second is metonymic. At times, wisdom, or a certain level of reading experience is required to grasp when levels of representation change. The prophetic text doesn't, for reasons of having been sealed and secret, always come equipped with lane-change road signs.

The ram of Daniel 8 is trampled, and "no one could rescue the ram from [the he-goat's] power" (verse 7), so the ram ceases to exist as an entity. Not so with the he-goat after his great horn is broken.

I need to mention that the silver of the Media Persia Empire exists when the rock cut without hands crushes the toes of Nebuchadnezzar's statue. That empire is obliterated by the first king of Greece, but exists as one of the major players at the time of the end. So we know the identity of some of the toes from Daniel's interpretation.

Continuing in Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, we see that "there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron; just as iron crushes and smashes everything, it shall crush and shatter all these" (2:40). For centuries biblical scholars have identified this fourth kingdom as Rome. Certainly, Rome defeated Greece militarily, then borrowed most of Greece's culture. But how many capitals did Rome have when it defeated Greece? Remember, as the bronze belly and thighs, Greece is divided prior to when the fourth kingdom appears on Nebuchadnezzar's statue. The fourth kingdom appears on the historical stage already divided. And to find Rome in the biblical text, a prophecy expert will have, of necessity, added it to Christ's revelation, or Daniel's visions.

In Daniel's vision of the he-goat trampling the ram, "[A]t the height of its power, the great horn was broken, and in its place there came up four prominent horns towards the four winds of heaven" (8:7). These four horns continue until the little horn that springs out of one of them (verse 9) "shall even rise against the Prince of princes. / But he shall be broken, and not by human hands" (verse 27). The time frame is Christ's return, and "in the days of those kings [the ten toes of iron and clay] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed . . . just as [Nebuchadnezzar] saw that a stone was cut from the mountain not by hands, and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold" (2:44–45). Again note the essence of all four kingdoms (the iron, bronze, clay, silver, gold) are present together when smashed by a cut stone.

Because of who makes the identification, we can say with certainty that the belly and thighs of bronze of Nebuchadnezzar's image are Greece. But Gabriel doesn't reveal another kingdom replacing Greece. Rather, from the king of Greece arises four horns, or kings, one of which will give rise to a little horn that makes war with Christ at his return. The four horns carry forward through time from when the first horn is broken to Christ's return. No other kingdom comes after them, except Christ's.

An angel brings another vision to Daniel that pertains to Persia and Greece:

Three more kings shall arise in Persia. The fourth. . . shall stir up all against the kingdom of Greece. Then a warrior king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion and take action as he pleases. And while still rising in power, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not

to his posterity, nor according to the dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted and go to others besides these. (11:2–4)

In both visions, we see the great horn of the he-goat broken, and the Greek kingdom divided to the four winds. In this latter vision, we also see the third kingdom uprooted, this uprooting creating the fourth kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar's image.

So far we haven't left the Book of Daniel. We haven't inserted a secular history textbook. We haven't twisted meaning from the text as if the Bible were a dishrag to be wrung dry by our wrestling with it. Thus, we can say with certainty that this prophetic reading is of God at this point.

Since we have Gabriel's interpretation that the reign of the four horns that appear on the head of the he-goat after the first horn is broken extend forward until Christ returns, we can say with certainty that the fourth kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar's image derives from the four horns. This is confirmed by the angel who brings Daniel the vision of what will happen in the latter days. Thus, the fourth kingdom is not Rome and never was Rome. To try to make the fourth kingdom Rome is to force onto the prophecy what isn't in the text.

Admittedly, the vision of Daniel 11 was sealed and secret until the time of the end and really couldn't have been used by earlier biblical commentators to explicate Nebuchadnezzar's image. But the kings of the North and the South, emerging from the four-part division of the Greek Empire following Alexander's death, are, unarguably, the two legs of iron. And Biblical scholars are ahead of me: the division of Greece into four parts following Alexander's death (Asia Minor, Egypt, the Near East and Greece) didn't last long. From secular texts, we know that the Ptolemaic and Seleucid Empires had consolidated power and were at war with each other. But our goal is to stay inside biblical prophecies for the time being, so I will retain the identifying names of the king of the North and the king of the South.

From Greece comes two powers that span from the 4th-Century B.C.E. to the time of Christ's intervention in human affairs. The two legs of iron of Nebuchadnezzar's image are these two kings, who will be seen to be demons, just as the king of Greece (the body of the he-goat) is a demon.

Reviewing what we know so far, the course of empires since Nebuchadnezzar is Babylon, Media Persia, Greece, the reign of the king of the North and the king of the South, then Christ's millennium reign. Christ's reign is a theocracy. Actually, so are all of the others although current Western social constructs tend not to think of the religious aspect of Babylon even though the story of Shadrack, Meshach, and Abednego is common children's literature. Alexander was identified as the son of god. So for the reigns of the king of the North and the king of the South, we should look for theocratic reigns. And again jumping ahead of ourselves, what we find is the Orthodox and Universal Churches claiming authority over secular kings and princes—and we find

caliphs ruling as the secular and religious heads of state. Although the assignment of identify will not be as simple as I here make it, we find the king of the North as the ruler of Christianity, and the king of the South as the ruler of Islam. The king of the North is the spiritual power behind the Vatican, and behind the Orthodox patriarchs, not exactly something they want to be told. And I left the biblical text to arrive at these conclusions.

From the biblical text we can state that both Babylon's and Christ's Millennium reigns are conjoined secular and ecclesiastical administrations; thus, to identify who the king of the North is from biblical text, we need to return to Daniel 8. Gabriel tells Daniel, "Understand, O Mortal, that the vision is for the time of the end" (verse 17). The first king of Greece doesn't reign at the time of the end, so the sense of what Gabriel tells Daniel is the vision of ram and he-goat was to be understood at the end of the age, implying that it couldn't be understood earlier.

But Gabriel's dating of the vision is more precise than a general statement about being for the time of the end: "Listen, and I will tell you what will take place later in the period of wrath; for it refers to the appointed time of the end" (verse 19). The period of wrath is the Tribulation in usual biblical parlance. *Later in the period of wrath* suggests the vision is for the second half of seven years of Tribulation. This actually fits with the vision of Daniel 7 being for the first half.

The expression used in Daniel 8, *the appointed time of the end*, is found in three expressions of Daniel 11: "At the time appointed" (verse 29), and "for there remains an end at the time appointed" (verse 27), and "At the time of the end" (verse 40). Because of the links between the four horns and the kingdom being divided to the four winds, and between the two legs and the reign of the kings of the North and of the South, we should expect the referent for the dating expression used in Daniel 8 to be found in Daniel 11—and it is, as the above cites indicate. Therefore, we can identify and date the "king of bold countenance" (Dan 8:23), and we can say what he does and when he comes to his end, that information not now known to biblical commentators.

Linguistically, the identity of the "king of bold countenance" (Dan 8:23) is a little vague. The common mistake is to identify this king as the little horn that Daniel sees arise from one of the four horns. We want this king to be the little horn, for he shall destroy "the people of the holy ones" (verse 24). He "took the regular burnt offering away" (verse 11 also 12–14). But he is the king of the North, himself, for we know who takes the regular burnt offering away and when: "From the time the regular burnt offering is taken away . . . there shall be one thousand two hundred ninety days" (Dan 12:11); and "Forces sent by him [the king of the North] shall occupy and profane the temple and fortress. They shall abolish the regular burnt offering" (11:31). The king of the North, then, takes away the regular burnt offering 1290 days before Christ returns as

the all powerful Messiah. The little horn has not, as will be seen, yet arrived in prophecy.

Fun can be had reading the 1290 days as years or some other unit of time, but since the prophecy was sealed until the time of the end, the days don't need to be longer than days, 24 hours in length.

Paul tells us that "the day of the Lord" won't come until "the lawless one is revealed," the one who "takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God" (2 Thess 2:2-4). At the end of the rule of the four kingdoms that shall arise from Greece [the four horns], "a king of bold countenance shall arise, / skilled in intrigue" (Dan 8:23), and the king of the North "shall seduce with intrigue those who violate the covenant" (11:32). In fact, the king of the North shall "obtain the kingdom through intrigue" (11:21). So without twisting the text into contortions, we can say that Paul's man of perdition or lawless one is the king of the North, who sets up the *abomination that desolates*, which is him declaring himself God, or rather, the Messiah, when he takes away the regular offering 1290 days before Christ returns as the all powerful Messiah. He is the antetype antiChrist.

We have arrived where we began without leaving the text, almost. We need now to cement the relationship between the king of the North and the Universal and Orthodox Churches. We have shown that he is the man of perdition, but that doesn't necessarily make him the spiritual power behind the Cross.

2.

While prophecies have been understood to have metaphoric and metonymic fulfillments, most of the historic assignment of events to prophecies, especially in Daniel, have, in the past, been only metonymic, with an earlier metonymic fulfillment having occurred and a latter metonymic fulfillment anticipated. Traditionally, these prophecies of Daniel have been read as pertaining only to real people and to nations of real people. As such, beasts have been read metonymically, with only horns read metaphorically, meaning that beasts have been read as alignments of nations. For example, the beast of Revelation 17 has been read within the Churches of God as the Holy Roman Empire, with five kings or revivals having already come and gone (when the prophesy was understood by Herbert Armstrong); with the one that *is* being Mussolini, who has now gone; and with the one to come being the future king of the North, a ten nation combine with Germany as its power center and the Roman Church as its spiritual center. This reading has an extratextual component (the introduction of the Holy Roman Empire), but its greatest fault lies in its failure to appreciate the continued existence of the king of the North through successive human rulers.

Herbert Armstrong never accounted for when the vision of this Revelation 17 beast occurs. An angel who had already emptied its bowl of wrath brings the vision to John, so at least one of the seven bowls of the wrath of God had been poured out, and the first bowl caused "a foul and painful sore to come on those who had the mark of the beast" (Rev 16:2); therefore, the earliest the vision can occur is the later portion of the period of wrath. When Herbert Armstrong claimed to understand this vision and that the one who is was Mussolini, no second beast of Revelation 13 had yet required all of humanity to bear the mark of the beast.

While Herbert Armstrong's reading of the beast of Revelation 17 is plausible, it is uninspired and actually contrary to what the angel tells John (Rev 22:18–19). But his reading is as good as Hal Lindsay's, or Ellen G. White's, or a host of other known and unknown biblical commentators.

The prevailing reading paradigms for prophetic understanding has identified the four beasts of Daniel 7 as Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, whereas the angelic attendant told Daniel that the four beasts are four kings. The angelic attendant told Daniel to treat the prophecy metaphorically, not metonymically. So our traditional metonymic assignment of nations to those four beasts has been contrary to divine instruction . . . what is new about that? All of Christianity has to one degree or another ignored what Jesus taught His disciples, a claim I can prove but not here.

Because we have read those beasts metonymically rather than metaphorically, our prophetic focus has been on Rome, the Holy Roman Empire and its revivals, and the Roman See. We have produced the illogical construct that the little horn of Daniel 7 is not the little horn of Daniel 8 even though both little horns do the same thing at the same time. If we were to overlay one horn over the other, we would see that the four kings of Daniel 7 are the four horns of the he-goat of Daniel 8. We would also see that our Roman focus has been in error: our prophetic focus should have been on the king of Greece, or the he-goat, this king not human, but the demon of Daniel 10:20. The fourth or undescribed beast of Daniel 7, then, becomes the king of the North, his ten horns ten nations (according to the angel) that will exist at the time of the end. Traditionally, the Church of God has read the horns as ten revivals of the Roman empire, with the Pope uprooting three of them, the Pope being the little horn.

I want to pause here: the problem with uninspired readings of prophecy is the necessity of having differing readings with differing focuses for similar passages. The beast of Revelation 17 becomes the revivals of only the Holy Roman Empire while the ten horns of the fourth beast of Daniel 7 are ten revivals of the Roman Empire, with the remaining seven being the revivals of the Holy Roman Empire. The ten horns of the beast of Revelation 17 aren't revivals at all, but ten human nations that form one endtime coalition. Doesn't this seem illogical, especially so when the inspired interpretation says, "As for

the ten horns, / out of this kingdom [the fourth beast] ten kings shall arise, / and another shall arise after them" (Dan 7:24 — compare to verses 7–8). All ten kings are in place before the little horn appears. The text contradicts Herbert Armstrong's reading, thereby making him a false teacher, which is a harsher statement than I want to make but the truth of the situation in which the Church of God finds itself today. Thousands of drawn saints have had their faith shaken because it was placed in a man, not in Christ. Likewise, hundreds of thousands of born-again Christians mocked the prophetic readings of Herbert Armstrong in the 1940s before borrowing all or part of those same uninspired readings in the 1970s. They will also have their faith shaken when Rome is not central to the king of the North's ten nation coalition. Seven of those nations are identified by their ancient names in the biblical text, a teaser for causing you to continue reading to see if I really name them.

At best, Herbert Armstrong produced a dishonest reading of Daniel 7, for all ten kings exist together before the little horn uproots three of them. The better reading strategy would be what the angel suggested, to read the passages metaphorically.

With the exception of the seventy weeks prophecy, we have been reluctant to read Daniel's prophecies metaphorically, even though we were told to do so by Gabriel. But the ruler of Greece is demonstrably a demon: the angel told Daniel, "Now I must return to fight against the prince [Hebrew *sar*, meaning head person or ruler] of Persia, and when I am through with him, the prince [*sar*] of Greece will come" (Dan 10:20). If this angel is Gabriel as in the earlier prophecy, the angel wasn't fighting against a human opponent. Rather, he was fighting with a demonic being his equal in strength, or equal enough in power to resist him for 21 days. Yet this demon that rules Persia is not the equal of the demon that rules Greece, if the he-goat of Daniel 8 is read metaphorically.

In vision, Daniel saw, "[A] male goat [appear] from the west, coming across the face of the whole earth without touching the ground" (Dan 8:5). Alexander the Great traveled fast. He literally outflanked opposing armies, appearing where he wasn't expected. But he didn't levitate during his warring, nor did he have helicopters, or stealth fighters, or B-52 bombers. He traveled on the ground. So for Daniel 8:5 to refer to Alexander, the gerund clause *coming across the face of the whole earth without touching the ground* must be read metaphorically, with the he-goat read metonymically. However, if that same gerund clause is read mimetically, with the he-goat read metaphorically, then the he-goat becomes a demon, the ruler of Greece who will still be on the world scene at the time of the end. From this ruler of Greece will come the King of the North, described in chapter 11. This king of the North will emerge as the dominant power, but not the only power on the world stage. This king of the North will endure until the middle of the Tribulation (Rev 11:15–19 & Dan 7:9–14), but the other three beasts of Daniel 7 will outlast him for "a

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season and a time" (Dan 7:12). This short period, *a season and a time*, is developed more fully in other prophecies concerning the last few days of this era.

The ruler of Greece is outwardly a human being, but this person has a supernatural being of great power backing him up. Greek paganism intuited as much, but a close reading of Greek mythology reveals that their gods were acting as agents of human beings, not the other way around. Even today, Evangelical Christianity, derived from Greek philosophical exegesis, directs the Father and Christ to heal upon command, and to bless upon demand. Painting with a broad brush, I will assert that they assign to Christ and the Father the same relationship ancient Athenians had with Zeus and Athena. They would not agree, but to a reader of texts and an observer of culture (the qualifications of a novelist, which I am by training and practice), by the boldness with which they pray publically they seem to rule the Father and Christ in a manner similar to how ancient Greeks commanded Zeus and Athena to fight their enemies and prosper them. They sing the type of praise music ancient playwrights assigned to choruses to sing to the Pantheon. Some phrasing could be directly lifted one for the other. Their television services are theater.

Ancient Greeks praised their Pantheon, loved their Pantheon, gave honor and respect to their Pantheon. And the Church of God's Roman bias has prevented us from seeing how alike all Western cultures are to the ancient Athenian Greeks, even to after-death belief paradigms and voting our leaders into office.

As citizens of a great democracy, Americans have traditionally perceived ourselves as being masters of our destinies. The concept of human activities either being directed by spirit beings, or serving as extensions to what occurs within that realm is difficult for us to accept, especially so when the concept is so closely aligned with paganism. What the concept asks us to accept is that we are pawns at best in a struggle in dimensions we cannot enter, observe, or fully explain. Mathematically, we can establish the existence of furled dimensions outside of, or beyond our four. Religiously or superstitiously, we have made petitions to life forms in unfurled dimensions. Occasionally, life forms from those dimensions have entered ours; occasionally, paranormal events have occurred that have no explanation if life doesn't exist in unfurled dimensions beyond our own. But to accept the idea that we are, in reality, mere lab mice to a higher order of life forms goes against everything we believe about ourselves. We don't want Daniel's he-goat read metaphorically. Our cultural psyche demands that the he-goat be Alexander the Great, who, history assures us, died during a drunken debauch, and that his empire was divided among four generals.

But Gabriel told Daniel, "Understand, O mortal, that the vision is for the time of the end" (Dan 8:17). How are we to read this? Mimetically? If that is not the case, then what do we do with verses 23–26?

Traditionally, the Church of God has read Gabriel's explanation of Daniel's vision as having a time break between verse 22 and verse 23, that break 2300 years long. Thus Alexander the Great is the he-goat, and in a literally sense, two millennia in the future is *many days*. But this isn't really how the passage reads.

Gabriel told Daniel to seal the vision, phrasing that echoes what the angel told Daniel in 12:9 ("*Go your way, Daniel, for the words are to remain secret and sealed until the time of the end*"). Prophecies are of no use if they are never unsealed, so the textual assumption is the vision of the he-goat will be unsealed at the time of the end.

Within the greater Church of God, it has been believed that we have been living in the time of the end since the 1930s. That has been an unjustified assumption based upon Herbert Armstrong allegedly having the spirit of prophecy, when, at best, Mr. Armstrong was guilty of misreading all prophecies because it wasn't the time of the end. It isn't, based upon his teaching about the prophecies of Ezekiel, a far stretch to label him a false prophet by the standards God applies in Ezekiel 12:21–28, with specific reference to verses 26–28, and I have picked on him enough. Well, almost enough. Mr. Armstrong taught that all of Ezekiel's prophecies have a future *type* fulfillment, when God says not to think that. Mr. Armstrong never understood the new covenant, never understood that the houses of Israel are no longer in a covenant relationship with God except under terms of the new covenant, never understood that the national blessings and cursings of the first covenant were abolished when the first covenant was abolished by the covenantor's death at Calvary. And because of his failure to understand the new covenant, the Church of God is today saddled with a tradition of false teachings, the accusation of being a cult, and schisms across schisms as *watchmen* vie with each other over who best continues to hold fast to the prophetic teachings of *God's essential endtime man*. The story of what happened to the Church of God after his death is too unbelievable to use as a plot for a novel, as little men suddenly felt liberated, many for the first time—and freedom is a heady feeling for someone whose feet barely reach the ground.

My quibbling with the prophetic readings of a dead man aren't because I need to overcome him personally. He remains my spiritual father, and I truly have no Oedipus complex. Rather, my concern is for those saints who have deified the man, and are unwilling to move beyond his teachings. My love for these saints is great enough that I will skewer my own spiritual father to bring these saints back into fellowship with the greater Church of God. Likewise, my concern for all Christians is great enough that I will take on Peter's ignorant readers in what will be only a partially successful attempt to purify the visible Church. I am, by self-definition, a Puritan. My goal is to purify all of Christianity as the Bride makes Herself ready for the Groom. The level of doctrinal error now in Christianity has, and will have most born-again

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Christians worshipping demons (Rev 9:20) and accepting the mark of the beast. If you don't think so, ask yourself, will you wear a tattoo of the Cross of Calvary? Think about this while I unmask beasts. These Christians who accept the mark of the beast will actually be enemies of Christ, which He will slay upon His return (Luke 19:27).

If we weren't in that generic period of history known as *the time of the end* when Herbert Armstrong taught his skewed prophetic understanding, then the prophecies of Daniel were not understandable even though meaning was assigned to them. Again, readers assign meaning to the biblical text through their assignment of linguistic objects of the public icons. As much as our psyche would like for words to have meaning, that is not the case. Therefore, because of all of humanity's need to understand the unknown, the Church of God was able to make sense of the prophecies of Daniel through our assignment of meaning, shared within the reader community raised up from among the individuals the Father drew from the world. In other words, if we all agree that the he-goat is Alexander the Great, for us the he-goat is Alexander the Great. The only problem is, for God the he-goat seems to be the demonic king of Greece. The demon doesn't die when the physical empire of Alexander was divided. Rather, the kings of the North and of the South appear on the world scene, and war against each other until the resurrection of saints at Christ's return.

The concept needs to be clarified. When Satan rebelled against Elohim, he sowed rebellion. He has since reaped rebellion. The demons who joined him have a rebellion-oriented mindset. They are now unrulable by anybody, including each other. They will not willingly submit to Satan's rule, or to the king of Greece's rule. The breaking of the he-goat's single horn and the appearance of the four horns might well be the representation of a coup d'etat having occurred in the spirit realm, with the four beasts of Daniel 7 the four principles in the coup, and with the king of the North being the last to join, but also being the force behind the rebellion.

Human activities on the global scale are reflections of demonic warrings and schemings in unfurled dimensions, which humanity cannot enter or observe. This is not something any of us want to acknowledge, but once we realize this, the prophetic world opens before us. This pairing of activities will cause revisiting every prophecy, and rethinking what Satan has been doing for the past six millennia. Satan as Lucifer wasn't tending his flower garden before Eden (an overstatement of another of Herbert Armstrong's extratextual teachings), and he hasn't been since.

Realizing the spiritually obvious, that angels inhabit unfurled dimensions which are not part of the creation of matter and that they war against each other in these dimensions, should cause us to reevaluate Greek importance as Elohim's foil (the term lifted directly from Greek drama).

Does your house dog realize that it is your pet? It doesn't seem to think on that level, does it? How could you tell it about national, or international politics? Can't, can you? Its mind does not possess the degree of self-awareness necessary for it to comprehend its relationship with you. As far as it is concerned, it is part of a pack of which you are the dominant dog. It is perfectly content being a pack animal. Occasionally the person who should be dominant surrenders that position to the dog, and the dog becomes confused about its place in the pack. As a former parttime dogcatcher, I had to pick up some of these animals that their owners could no longer control. Communication failure had occurred. Sometimes the dog started over again in another pack (in another family); sometimes the animal was put down. In every case, the failure to communicate was with the owner, who failed to grasp his or her obligation to communicate.

Humanity isn't a large dogpack. Rather, we are created in the image of God, which gives us self-awareness, which is why slavery is a horrible state for a human to find him or herself. Because of having self-awareness, we have had our ability to input knowledge restricted, for without those restrictions, we would have determined that we are lab animals in demonstration projects conducted by a higher order of beings long before we were supposed to know. We are not anybody's pets. I want that to be clear. But because our reality is an artificial construct related to our use of language, we can be used to demonstrate, say, that, using the primary construct presently underpinning society, competition is good. As Americans, we cannot imagine life without competition; yet every Christian prays for Christ's government to rule over him or her, and Christ's governance will not be based upon competition, but upon love or cooperation. Thus, we can, by grasping how entwined competition is in our thought processes, understand that we in the Western world are demonstrating the superiority of (jumping ahead in my argument) the king of the North's argument with his fellow demons.

I should sound like a kook: humanity as lab animals, and competition as not the "naturally superior" way of life but just another artificial construct—what am I saying? Our level of self-awareness is limited to what we can input, as is all of our knowledge. Prophecy, though, is revealed knowledge. It is knowing what couldn't otherwise be known or determined by humanity. It is communication from higher life forms to us. The claim of the Bible is that the highest life form of all has chosen this means of communicating with humanity. To establish the credibility of this highest life form, prophecy has been given **and sealed** until the end of an era. Because a rebellion occurred, there are other life forms vying with the Most High. The rebels would take credit for revealing the future if they could: Satan would claim to possess all knowledge if he could reveal the future to humanity. He can't. He can't even read what the Most High revealed, nor can his ministers of righteousness (2 Corth 11:15).

Prophecies that have been sealed for two and three millennia could not now be read by me or anyone else if we haven't entered the time of the end. Again, my argument is that we have finally entered the time of the end. My argument isn't based upon the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or a potential war with Iraq, or terrorists getting nuclear bombs. Rather, my argument is solely based upon an ability to now read the biblical text in an inspired manner. Never before have biblical scholars understood the importance of Greece—I can't even discuss either language or prophecy without borrowing concepts from the Greeks. Never before have we been self-aware of our role as lab animals for demons, something many intelligent people will reject out of hand.

The Most High has set about to demonstrate His claim of being Most High by opening prophecies given and sealed long ago. The Most High has given this prophetic understanding not to someone who might claim to have come to it through diligent Bible study, but to a former dogcatcher.

3.

When the biblical passages that reference the abolishment of the "daily," or the daily sacrifice, and the setting up of the abomination that makes desolate are collected, we find that they all refer to *the time of the end* when read mimetically. Daniel 12:11 reads, "From the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that desolates is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred ninety days" before the Messiah appears and the saints are resurrected. However, Daniel 9:27 should be read metaphorically: "He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall make sacrifice and offering cease; and in their place shall be an abomination that desolates, until the end is poured out upon the desolator." With each week in this passage representing seven years, making the half week three and a half years, this prophecy also places the abomination within the range of accuracy to agree with 1290 days (three and a half years, plus a month).

In answering His disciples questions about the sign of His coming and the end of the age, Jesus said, "So when you see the desolating sacrilege standing in the holy place, as was spoken of by the prophet Daniel (let the reader understand), then those in Judea must flee to the mountains" (Matt 24:15); for Jerusalem is about to be destroyed by the armies surrounding it, this battle described in Zechariah 14:1–5. The battle culminates in the sequence of events that will lead to Christ's return as the all powerful Messiah. So the appearance of the *abomination that desolates* is the primary sign of Christ's return.

Before continuing, I need to here state that the traditional understanding of armies surrounding Jerusalem when Christ returns as the all powerful Messiah is faulty. The armies that surround Jerusalem belong to the king of the North. Christ fights against them as on *a* [indefinite article] day of battle as

opposed to *the* [definite article] day of battle, which is Armageddon. On day 1260, Christ fights here on earth while Michael fights against Satan in heaven. This is a day of war like no other that has ever been experienced. The earth swallows the armies of the king of the North, but more of this in successive paragraphs and sections. And it is on day 1260 when all of the uninspired readings of prophecy fail to prepare the saints for what will occur as Satan declares himself the Messiah.

When Paul corrects the Thessalonians who thought Christ's return was eminent, he writes, "As to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one destined for destruction. He opposes and exalts himself above every so called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God" (2 Thess 2:1–4). Thus, the *abomination that desolates* which is the sign of Christ's return isn't the fulfillment that occurred when Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 B.C. set up a statue of Zeus in the temple and sacrificed pigs on the alter; nor is it the stopping of the daily sacrifice when Rome sacked Jerusalem and tore down the temple in 70 A.D. Rather, the event is the future occurrence of a demon-possessed individual who takes his seat in the temple and declares himself God.

Returning to Daniel and coupling what Paul wrote about *the one destined for destruction* with what Daniel observed in his dream, a parallel appears: "And as I watched, the beast was put to death, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire" (Dan 7:11). A question must be asked, when is this beast's body actually burned? In text, we find bodies being burned upon Christ's return as the all powerful Messiah: "And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed in its presence the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who had worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire" (Rev 19:20).

Jesus said wisdom is required to understand about the *abomination that desolates* (Matt 24:15), because the king of the North is a demon that won't die as a human would. If upon Christ's return only two entities are thrown into the lake of fire, and if we are told that the fourth beast of Daniel 7 is destroyed by fire, then a reasonable assumption is that the fourth beast is one of the two entities thrown into the lake of fire, the other entity being the false prophet, also a demon.

When the vision Daniel describes in chapter 7 is interpreted for him, the fourth beast is a king that "shall arise out of the earth" (7:17). This king has a kingdom of ten horns, or subordinate kings. Then a little horn that "shall be different from the former [kings] . . . shall put down three kings" (verse 24). The text will support an argument that all ten kings are subordinate demons, but wisdom says that we have shifted to a different level of linguistic representation, thereby making these ten kings human rulers. Not so for the

little horn, of whom Gabriel says is different, which could mean that the little horn is a religious leader as opposed to a political leader, or it could mean that the little horn is an angel, not human, or it could mean both.

Let's pause here and clarify the murk for my sake if not yours. We have seen that the four world ruling empires are Babylon, Media Persia, Greece, and the Greek derivative reign of the kings of the North and of the South. With caution, I want to step outside the biblical text and say that Greece was not a united kingdom until Alexander's father Philip began his north to south conquest of Greek peoples. History tells us of the warrings between Athens and Sparta. And while I do not want to be guilty of doing that which I have condemned (introducing secular history into the biblical text), readers need to know about these wars—and I will leave them here, at the edge of the inspired text, for the demons who are the kings of the North and of the South were warring as the respective supernatural powers behind Athens and Sparta prior to Greece's introduction into the biblical text. In two longer manuscripts (*A Philadelphia Apologetic* and *Holiness, Righteousness & the New Covenant*), I better show how the philosophical values of ancient Athens are today manifest in the greater Christian Church. The same mind behind the social constructs of Athens are behind the social constructs of visible Christianity. And the scholar who pursues this line of inquiry will find the identical situation applies for Sparta and Islam.

The king of the North will take away the regular burnt offering as prophesied in Daniel 11:31. He will then declare himself God, thereby raising himself to the height of heaven. He will become the antetype fulfillment of prophecies about the antiChrist. His destiny is the lake of fire as the beast in Revelation 19:20 and 20:10 ("Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations at the four corners of the earth . . . and fire came down from heaven and consumed them. And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were" [verses 7–10]). Altogether, three entities are thrown into the lake of fire: Satan, the beast, and the false prophet. The beast and the false prophet are thrown in because of their role in setting up the *abomination that desolates*. We could argue that Satan is also thrown in because of his role in starting the rebellion against Elohim, or because he is the worst of the bad guys, but in reality, he is also thrown into the lake of fire because of his role in the *abomination that desolates* scheme, perhaps the most evil role of them all.

When the king of the North is destroyed, he will receive figuratively mouth-to-mouth resuscitation from the little horn, who "threw down to earth some of the host and some of the stars, and trampled on them" (8:10). We find that the tail of the great red dragon "swept down a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth" (Rev 12:4). This dragon is the devil. And this "great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world — he was thrown down to the

earth, and his angels were thrown down with him" (verse 9). This happens 1260 days before Christ returns, and as I have previously said, this day is probably the most important one in the entire endtime scenario, for on this day, the 144,000 saints are also taken to a place prepared for them. The flood/armies the dragon sends after them is swallowed by the earth, and the destruction of these armies which had been surrounding Jerusalem is the mortal wound delivered to the king of the North. There, I said it. This is the date and the event needed to knit together all endtime prophecies. The Mount of Olives splits as a stone cut without hands (this is the stone Nebuchadnezzar saw). A wide valley forms, and the saints flee through this valley. The valley then closes and literally swallows the pursuing armies; this event is prophesied in the Song of Moses, by Zechariah, and in Revelation. Christ fights as on *a* day of battle. This is not Armageddon, *the* day of battle. There are still 1260 days remaining before Christ returns, but the messages being taught by the *watchmen* would have Christ returning this day. But it won't be Christ who declares himself the messiah on this day; rather, Satan will, and he will require all to accept the mark of the beast. It is Satan on day 1260 who gives his great power and authority to the first beast of Revelation 13, that first beast having just received its mortal wound. It is Satan as the second beast of Revelation 13 who acts as the conservator for the first beast. Satan is the little horn, and Satan will uproot three of the nations that had comprised the king of the North's coalition when he arrives as a roaring lion, seeking to devour whom he can. And as of today, no coalition for peace will be formed without the United States being part of that coalition, so we the United States will, probably, be part of the king of the North's coalition. If we are, then we can expect to be uprooted when Satan arrives full of fury. Our isolationist tendencies would keep us out of this coalition, but the likelihood of us listening to our hearts and to George Washington (about entangling foreign alliances) is slim. Most likely, multinational interests will compel our involvement.

That should muddy waters all the way to Christ's return, so let's see this scenario in Scripture: the little horn of Daniel 8 does what Satan is said to have done in casting down stars, a metaphoric expression usually identifying angels. At this point is it safe to say that the little horn is directly related to Satan, and is either Satan or his manifest representative.

We have another little horn existing at the same time and doing the same sort of things. During the first year of King Belshazzar (roughly two years before the vision of the he-goat), Daniel saw a vision that greatly troubled him:

I, Daniel, saw in my vision . . . four great beasts
[come] up out of the sea, different from one another.
The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. . . .
Another beast appeared . . . that looked like a bear. .
. . . After this . . . another appeared, like a leopard.
. . . After this . . . a fourth beast, terrifying and

dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth and was devouring, breaking in pieces, and stamping what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that preceded it, and it had ten horns. I was considering the horns, when another horn appeared, a little one coming up among them; to make room for it, three of the earlier horns were plucked up by the roots. (7:2–8)

Before explicating this vision which I have already referenced many times, I should say that the usual assignment of meaning to these four beasts is the same as is usually assigned to the four kingdoms of Nebuchadnezzar's image: Babylon, Media Persia, Greece, and Rome. But I don't find Rome in the divine explanation of these prophecies. When Daniel asked one of the angelic attendants to the throne of the Most High God about the beasts, the angel said, "As for these four great beasts, four kings shall arise out of the earth. But the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever" (verses 17–18). So the four beasts are four kings, but they are not human kings. The first had its wings plucked off and "was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a human being; and a human mind was given to it" (verse 4). Human kings and kingdoms don't need to be given human minds. Demons, though, do. So what we see are four demons, with one of the demons having ten horns, plus a little horn.

The first little horn shall "speak words against the Most High, / shall wear out the holy ones of the Most High, / and shall attempt to change the sacred seasons and the law; / and they [the holy ones] shall be given into his power / for a time, two times, and half a time" (Dan 7:25). This little horn remains in power until "The kingship . . . of the kingdoms under the whole heaven / shall be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High" (verse 27). This is when Christ returns as the all powerful Messiah. So the little horn's dominion over the saints is for the last 42 months before Christ returns.

In Daniel's second vision, Gabriel says of the little horn, "He shall destroy the powerful / and the people of the holy ones. . . . Without warning he shall destroy many / and shall even rise up against the Prince of princes" (8:24–25).

Again, we know exactly when *the regular burnt offering* will be taken away: 1290 days before Christ returns. Christ said, "And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come. [paragraph break] So when you see the desolating sacrilege standing in the holy place, as was spoken of by Daniel . . . then those in Judea must flee to the mountains" (Matt 24:14–15). So the *abomination that desolates* will be set up at the time of the end, precisely when armies begin to surround Jerusalem, the reason for fleeing to the mountains. The 1290 days are literal days, not years or some other unit of time. So the king of the North takes away the regular burnt offering (which will, probably, be

restored, but doesn't have to be since the word means *regular*; thus any activity done on a regular basis such as walking to the wailing wall will satisfy the prophecy) 1290 days before Christ returns as the all powerful Messiah.

For thirty days, the man of perdition sits in the temple of God, declaring himself God. Exactly what occurs on a day-by-day basis is only generalized, with Luke's account of Jesus' Olivet discourse perhaps having the most information. Evidently, saints are arrested, imprisoned, and made to appear before authorities. They might well be transported to Jerusalem to stand trial, the suggestion of which is in "the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle" (Rev 12:14). But whatever occurs, on day 1260, a "war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. The great dragon . . . was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him" (verses 7–9), and "when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman" (verse 13), who flew "to her place where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time" (verse 14). It doesn't take the dragon long to realize that he has been cast down to earth; this is a same day event. And since there is no reason to nourish the saints for longer in the wilderness than the day of Christ's return as the all powerful Messiah, we can date this event to day 1260 (also see verse 6).

The little horn of Daniel 7 makes war against the holy ones for the last 1260 days before Christ returns:

As for the ten horns, / out of this kingdom ten kings
shall arise, / and another shall arise after them. /
This one shall be different from the former ones, / and
shall put down three kings. / He shall speak words
against the Most High, shall wear out the holy ones of
the Most High, / and shall attempt to change the sacred
seasons and laws; / and they shall be given into his
power / for a time, two times, and half a time. / Then
the court shall sit in judgment, / and his dominion
shall be taken away, / to be consumed and totally
destroyed. (7:24–26)

This is exactly the same period as when the dragon "went off to make war on the rest of her [the Church] children, those who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus" (Rev 12:17).

So the little horn of the fourth beast of Daniel 7 makes war against the saints for exactly the same period that Satan does. The little horn of Daniel 8 casts stars down exactly as Satan does. The little horns of both Daniel 7 and 8 come to an end when Christ returns as the all powerful Messiah, as does Satan. And while the evidence might not be overwhelming enough to convict Satan in

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a court of law of being the little horn, it is strong enough to support my contention that he is.

It is important to note that 144,000 saints were taken to a place prepared for them, but enough saints weren't a part of the 144,000 that Satan bothers to go after them. Joel says, referring to the day of the Lord, "[I]n Mount Zion and Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls" (2:32). So the textual suggestion is that even in Jerusalem there will be saints who aren't part of the 144,000 who survive the last 1260 days. Worldwide, I suspect there are many, many saints who are supernaturally protected in place, but also, many who will be killed. Saints will not be raptured to heaven. That belief comes from a misapplication of what John was told (Rev 4:1), and since the Book of Revelation has been sealed by the literary trope used, understanding how the doctrine errs spiritually wasn't known, or at least, not widely known. Plus, the doctrine is adding to the Book of Revelation that which isn't in it. As such, it violates the prohibition of 22:18.

You can determine whether a person understands prophecy by whether the person finds the Roman Empire in Daniel and Revelation. If the person does, then the person has resorted to using extratextual materials to produce understanding; the person has added outside information to Scripture. That person's reading of prophecy isn't to be trusted.

Commentaries err which say the two little horns of Daniel 7 and 8 aren't the same. These commentators inevitably mis-identify the fourth beast of Daniel 7 as the Roman Empire, whereas Rome isn't referenced prophetically except indirectly and unnamed as part of a religious ideology.

4.

Before continuing in a somewhat orderly progression through beasts and horns, I need to establish Satan as the ruler of this world. Yes, several new covenant passages indicate that, but let's see if the connection can be more solidly made.

Now nearly three decades ago, I first heard Isaiah 14:12–17 used to describe the fall of Lucifer. I have occasionally returned to these verses, almost always skipping over verses 1–11, knowing that those verses describe the King of Babylon and his fall, believing (based on verses 22 & 23) that they describe events that have already happened. But the time frame of the proverb against the King of Babylon that Isaiah 14:4–11 represents is when "the Lord will have compassion on Jacob and will again choose Israel, and will set them in their own land" (Isa 14:1), with reference to a time shortly after when "the stars of the heavens and their constellations / will not give their light; / the sun will be dark at its rising / and the moon will not shed its light" (Isa 13:10). This time frame is the same as Jeremiah 23:8 references, the period between when Christ

returns as King of kings and when His Millennium reign begins, that period represented in the Holyday calendar between the Feast of Trumpets and the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles. The Lord settles the house of Israel or Jacob "in their own land"; the house of Judah is not referenced, suggesting that Judah has already returned. It is the house of Israel who will be gathered from the north countries, and these peoples will return from where they have been driven into captivity on a highway (Isa 11:16), thereby supplanting Israel's exodus from Egypt as the future's remembered liberation from oppression. And since Jeremiah 23:6 specifically references both Judah and Israel, it would be an invalid argument to say that verses 7 & 8 refer to the return of Russian Jews (of the house of Judah) to the modern nation of Israel as Evangelical ministers often claim when explaining this passage in Jeremiah. So this taunt against the king of Babylon is dated to when Christ returns as the all powerful Messiah even though Isaiah recorded the taunt twenty-seven centuries ago.

Who the King of Babylon is now becomes the question that needs resolved: the King of Babylon "struck down the peoples in wrath" and "ruled the nations in anger / with unrelenting persecution" (Isa 14:6). The "kings of the nations . . . shall speak and say to [the King of Babylon], 'Have you become as weak as we? Have you become like us'" (verses 9 & 10 NKJV). The taunt of these kings suggests that the King of Babylon isn't a human being—someone as weak as they are—but rather, a spirit being. This taunt is echoed in verse 16 (NKJV): "'Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world as a wilderness and destroyed its cities.'"

Where the kings' taunt is echoed in verse 16, scholars recognize the subject of the taunt is Satan. Since spirit beings are routinely identified in Scripture as kings and princes—examples would included the Logos as Christ identified as the "King of Peace" in Heb 7:2, and the "Prince of Peace" in Isa 9:6; and in the first *woe* of the Tribulation, the angel of the bottomless pit, named Abaddon in Hebrew and Apollyon in Greek, is identified as "king" over the locust plague (Rev 9:11)—Scriptural reference to a king or to a prince can be to the spiritual being that has power over a matching portion of the physical creation.

If all of the passage in Isaiah 14 (verses 3–23) that pertains to the King of Babylon and to Satan refers to Satan, it follows that Satan is the king over the image of successive kingdoms whose head is Babylon and whose feet are mixed iron and clay (Dan 2:32–45). The kingdom represented by the stone cut without hands will be the government set up by Christ (verse 44). Therefore, until Christ's return as the all powerful Messiah, the King of Babylon will still be on his throne, and Babylon will continue to exist, in that the image whose face was Nebuchadnezzar's still maintains its "king of kings" (verse 37) authority over earthly governments. Babylon is metaphorically the complete image that Nebuchadnezzar saw. The King of Babylon would have, then, ruled over both the "chest and arms of silver" and the "belly and thighs of bronze" (verse 32); therefore, the King of Babylon has authority over both the *sar* of

Persia and the *sar* of Greece. Both rulers are fallen angelic princes. Both nations form part of a single, human-like figure that takes its identity from its head, Babylon. But both princes fight each other as portrayed by the he-goat attacking the two horned ram of Daniel 8.

Since the angel sent to Daniel identifies those demons with which he had been fighting as "kings of Persia" in Dan 10:13, and since this angel tells Daniel that he had stood up for Darius the Mede and that "three more kings will arise in Persia" (Dan 11:1–2), the correspondence between human kings and their angelic counterparts seems well established, reintroducing the idea that we are not masters of our own national destinies as much as we would like to believe otherwise. Demonic powers don't wage spiritual warfare with physical chariots, horsemen, or ships; they don't have daughters or children as I mentioned before. But they do fight, even to trying to dethrone Elohim. I just cannot, because I am inside the creation and not outside, know exactly how they fight. At best, I can only see the physical counterpart to each action taken by, say, the king of the North against the king of the South as related in Dan 11:5–27, with verses 40–45 representing the physical manifestation of the spiritual warfare between these two demonic powers between days 1290 and 1260.

Prophetically, then, Satan is identified as the King of Babylon, about whom Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that "the God of heaven has given you a kingdom . . . [of] wherever the children of men dwell" (Dan 2:37–38 NKJV). That phrase is repeated elsewhere for lesser empires, but the phrase makes sense if Satan is the ruler of this present world as Jesus so identified him; so while Nebuchadnezzar failed to occupy China or Chile, both were given to Satan to rule for an age. Therefore, only Satan as the King of Babylon can empower the first beast of Revelation 13 to rule "over every tribe and people and language and nation" (verse 7). It is Satan's authority being employed by this beast. And it is Satan who will take a special interest in keeping it alive.

When Christ returns as the all powerful Messiah, he will be "called The Word of God" (Rev 19:13) and from his mouth comes a sword (verse 15), metaphorically the Bible. But this metaphor does a lot of killing (verse 21). If the prophecy of Isaiah concerning Babylon is considered, Christ "will make mortals more rare than fine gold, / and humans [more rare] than the gold of Ophir" (Isa 13:12).

Returning to the image Nebuchadnezzar saw, Daniel says, "And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron . . . As you saw the feet and toes partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom" (Dan 2:40–41). By extension, this fourth kingdom is part of Babylon even though it exists in a divided state when Christ smashes it with a large stone.

Babylon undergoes a figurative sex change with the fall of both legs of Nebuchadnezzar's statue: he becomes the woman "arrayed in purple and scarlet" (Rev 17:4), who is identified as "the mother of harlots" (verse 5). These harlots are generally identified as the *protesting* daughters of the Roman Church,

but nothing precludes these daughters from being other religions that promulgate Satan's lie to Eve: "You will not surely die" (Gen 3:4). The lie is that humanity has an immortal soul, that after death a person's soul goes to either heaven or hell if it doesn't get hungup somewhere in-between. The lie negates the need for any resurrection, or for Christ's sacrifice. It promises heaven without Christ having really died to pay the penalty for sin. It goes against scientific evidence that demonstrates humanity dies like other mammals do: "as one dies, so dies the other" (Eccl 3:19). It is the lie that tempts otherwise devout men to fly airplanes into both towers of the World Trade Center. It is a truly evil lie. And it is a tenet of every major religion (organized Christianity, Islam, modern Judaism) originating within the domain of Babylon. It entered Christianity through Greek converts, and Judaism through Hellenistic acculturation. Mohammad was, probably, a plagiarist. Regardless, the Greek concept of the afterlife was resurrected by all three faiths long after the Greek Pantheon died from spiritual neglect.

What we know about the transvestite whore identified as Babylon is that she rides "a beast of seven heads and ten horns" (Rev 17:7). While a beast can be read several different ways, there are a limited number of beasts with seven heads and ten horns on the world stage when Christ returns, especially ones ridden by Babylon—the king of Babylon, Satan, has given his authority to rule the world to a beast with seven heads and ten horns in Revelation 13, but it isn't Satan that rides this red beast in Revelation 17, nor are the ten horns those same nations. However, unless demonstrated otherwise, the assumption must be that these beasts are the same, and if they are, the seven heads are the seven heads of the four beasts of Daniel 7. In Revelation 17:9, the seven heads are identified as "seven kings." About these kings, five have fallen.

The setting of Revelation 17 is during the pouring out of the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth. It is not at the generic marker known as *the time of the end*. Rather, it is almost at the completion of God's punishment of the earth; for "one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, 'Come, I will show you the judgment of the great whore'" (Rev 17:1). It certainly is not when Mussolini reigned in the 1930s. The timing cannot be earlier than the pouring out of the first bowl for one of the angels *who had a bowl* came to John in vision.

The timing of what occurs when becomes important in deciphering "five [kings] have fallen, one is living, and the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must reign only a little while" (Rev 17:10). We know that when the angel pours the first bowl on the earth, "a foul and painful sore came on those who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped its image" (Rev 16:2); so showing John the fall of the transvestite whore Babylon the Great has to occur after the appearance of the second beast in Revelation 13:11–18. In text, Babylon's fall occurs in Chapter 14:8, suggesting that the text is presented in the chronological order that events happen.

If events are presented chronologically, then the king over the bottomless pit, the angel named Abaddon in Hebrew, will have come as part of the first woe: "The first woe has passed. There are still two woes to come" (Rev 9:12). This first woe occurs prior to the sealing of the 144,000, or prior to 1260 days before Christ's return as the all powerful Messiah. When Abaddon is released, instructions are given to the locust to harm "only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads" (Rev 9:4), the language strikingly similar to the language of Ezekiel 9:4, that seal being a mark made "on the foreheads of those who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed" (verse 4). There is no indication that the mark is related to the place of safety. Thus, by this reckoning, the Church of God's traditional reading of the Tribulation as 42 months long becomes problematic; for it seems that quite a bit occurs before the first woe passes. The seventy weeks prophecy of Daniel 9 now needs revisited, with that last week now metaphorically representing seven years of Tribulation.

With the completion of the first woe, one demonic king has come and passed. But when the sixth angel blew his trumpet, the command was given to release "'the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.' So the four angels were released, who had been held ready for the hour, the day, the month, and the years, to kill a third of humankind. The number of the troops of cavalry was two hundred million" (Rev 9:14–16). The two-thirds of "humankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands or give up worshipping demons" (verse 20). So with the killing of a third of humanity after afflicting humanity for five months with what feels like scorpion stings, five demonic beings, one of whom is identified as a king and the other four who could be since they command a force of 200 million, have come and passed. I believe these five "kings" are the five who "have fallen" of Revelation 17:10.

If the beast of Revelation 17 is the same beast as in Revelation 13, and is the same entity as the combined rule of the four beasts or kings of Daniel 7, then the demon bound at the Euphrates is the four headed leopard, with two sets of wings, but let me work my way to this same position from a different direction.

5.

I still haven't solidly linked the king of the North with visible Christianity although the evidence is mounting. What evidence you ask? And I ask you, what is the universally recognized sign of Christianity? Is it not the Cross of Calvary?

By overlapping the two little horns of Daniel 7 and 8, we see that the fourth beast of Daniel 7 is one of the four horns of Daniel 8, the one that becomes the king of the North, for it is he who takes away the daily sacrifice

(Dan 11:31). The angelic attendant says of this king and kingdom, "As for the fourth beast, / there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth / that shall be different from all the other kingdoms; / it shall devour the whole earth, / and trample it down, and break it to pieces" (7:23). If this fourth kingdom will be different from all other kingdoms, how will it be different? Kingdoms usually have geographical territory, national identities, and laws derived from a contract with its subjects or by divine right. What else? If this kingdom is to be different, then one or more of these requirements must vary from the norm. And the first thing we notice about this fourth kingdom is that it isn't described except for its iron teeth, bronze claws, and horns. The horns seem the most visible representation of this kingdom, and I will impose a little upon the text and say that it will be composed of international coalitions operating under the guidance of a spiritual power. What justifies saying a spiritual power? All of the other kingdoms, beginning with Babylon and continuing through to Christ's reign, are theocracies. There is no justification for this half kingdom not also being a theocracy. Plus, from this kingdom comes the little horn, or Satan, as has been shown.

We now need to jump forward to day 1260: the events of Revelation are presented in a mostly chronological order, an understanding that has come with the opening of the seals. Thus, after Satan is cast out of heaven and after the earth swallows the armies he sends after the 144,000, the first beast of Revelation 13 appears. Same day. All ten horns still have diadems, so all ten nations are still sovereign even though their armies have been destroyed. Therefore, the fourth beast, being the head that received the mortal wound, isn't a national power with geographical boundaries. If it were, then diadems would be missing if the first beast of Revelation 13 is the amalgamation of the four beasts of Daniel 7.

We should prophetically see the destruction of this fourth beast of Daniel 7 in Revelation: we do, but some wisdom is required. Satan arrives as the little horn on day 1260. Since Christ's revelation to John is mostly chronological the 12th and 13th chapters focus on the events of that day. But so do latter verses of the 11th chapter: the twenty-four elders sing, "We give you thanks, Lord God Almighty, / who are and who were, / for you have taken your great power / and began to reign" (verse 17), and "Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightening, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail" (verse 19). The parallel to this scene in Daniel 7 isn't exact:

As I watched, / thrones were set in place, / and an
Ancient One took his throne, . . . his throne was fiery
flames, / and its wheels were burning fire. / A stream
of fire issued / and flowed out from his presence . . .
The court sat in judgment, / and the books were opened.
/ I watched then because of the noise of the arrogant

words that the horn was speaking. And as I watched, the beast was put to death, and its body destroyed, and given over to be burned with fire. As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time (verse 9–12).

But the structural elements are the same: the kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of the Father and of Christ (Rev 11:15 and Dan 7:14), whereas Satan has been the ruler of the world as the king of Babylon. The judgment of the earth has begun (Rev 14:7 and Dan 7:10), as has the pouring out of God's wrath (Rev 14:10 and Dan 8:19). The Ancient of Days, or the Most High God, or the Father—all the same member of Elohim—has begun to exercise his reign (Dan 7:9 and Rev 11:16) by taking His throne.

Except for its iron teeth and bronze claws, no description is given of the fourth beast of Daniel 7. Not much is intended to be known about it until Daniel's vision and the book of Revelation are unsealed. Then no additional textual description will be given. Rather, the person with wisdom can piece together the dispersed passages to stay inside the text, or a person can look outside the text for its description, for its identity will then be known. We need to follow the power of the Seleucid throne as it passes through Roman hands and alights in Constantine's Christianity. This power doesn't reside just in the Vatican. Rather, it resides equally in the Orthodox Church, in the Evangelical Church, in the Coptic Church. Constantine consolidated his secular power with a few battlefield victories, then embraced Christianity to cement that power to an intangible, ideological construct that was humanly undefeatable. The power of the king of the North resides in the Cross. No other description is possible for the alignment of peoples and powers that are and that have been ruled by the Cross. The Cross has devoured and trampled and broken men and nations. And because the power of the Cross cannot be described in terms of ethnicity, or geography, or national sovereignty, no prophetic description is given, beyond stating that wisdom is required to understand any of this. So the king of the North's kingdom will be worldwide, and will be of a different sort than any previous kingdom. It will be a theocracy of a type unlike any other, in that it will be modern Crusaders fighting radical Islam under the banner of the Cross.

How about seeing this from inside the text? I'll try to show it within the next few pages.

The four beasts of Daniel 7 are the endtime manifestation of the four horns of the he-goat (the king of Greece) that are going to become the two theocracies of the kings of the North and of the South. Because of the little horn appearing in the fourth beast, we can identify this beast as the king of the North. Therefore, we can expect one of the other three beasts of Daniel 7 to be the king of the South. Also, since the four horns of Daniel 8 become two theocracies in Daniel 11, two of the horns are absorbed into the other two as

the historical record of what happened to the Ptolemaic and Seleucid Empires reveal. But these horns are the spiritual powers behind their human manifestations. These four horns represent demons, and as such, they don't disappear. They transcend the intrigues of their human counterparts, and they appear one after the other during the Tribulation. I will jump forward and say that one of these demons was bound in the bottomless pit, and one at the river Euphrates, leaving only two to wander through history, one of whom is the king of the North. What the other demon, since losing power to the fourth beast, has been doing for all of these years remains speculative.

The prelude to the events of the Tribulation will culminate with the supernatural destruction of a third of all vegetative matter. Then a meteor-like stone of many kilometers diameter is hurled into the sea, sending a tsunami ring inland that destroys more than we presently expect. Right after this, a third of all freshwater turns bitter and unusable. The skies darken, and humanity thinks the end of the age is upon it. These are the first four trumpet plagues, and are the heavenly signs about which Joel prophesied.

For a moment, I want to skip the fifth trumpet and go to the sixth: "Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice . . . saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, 'Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.' So the four angels were released, who had been held ready for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, to kill a third of humankind" (Rev 9:13–15). Now, remember that this occurs before the Lord God Almighty has begun to reign (11:16), and before the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of the Father and the Son (verse 15). So these four angels who are released to kill a third of humanity aren't part of God's wrath. They have been bound because they are dangerous demons. And bound, their influence has been limited to the area around the Euphrates.

I suspect readers are ahead of me: one of the three horns of the he-goat which do not sprout the little horn is the king of the South. By application, one of the first three beasts of Daniel 7 is the king of the South, and the third beast has four heads.

The king of the South has warred with the king of the North from the time of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid empires, but since the Muslim push into Europe and China in the 8th-Century, Christian knights had to take their fight to Muslim lands. Even today, we have to take our fight with Islamic radicals to Afghanistan, and possibly, Iraq. And for all of our diplomacy to prove otherwise, we are a Christian nation fighting Muslim forces. Our war on terrorism is, indeed, a religious war, and not fundamentalist against liberal, but the Athenian Greek values of liberty and democracy against the Spartan values of a warrior cult. The Cross theology of the king of the North is found in the values of Athens. Likewise, the *Jehad* mentality of radical Islam can be traced back to Sparta, and it forms the theology of the king of the South. And because of how virtually unstoppable this *Jehad* mentality is, God, I believe, bound the

four demon heads of the leopard at the river Euphrates to limit the expansion of Islam. I believe these demons were bound after the Book of Revelation was written, but obviously before it could be understood. I have nothing other than history as a guide for when these demons were bound. As such, my reading here is uninspired. I would welcome scholarly discussion of the subject.

Not enough evidence is given to convincingly establish the connection between the four angels of Revelation 9:13–19 and the third beast of Daniel 7 in the mind of unBelievers. Rather than stacking up additional straws, my purposes are better served by merely asserting that the four demons bound at the great river Euphrates are the four heads of the leopard, that this beast is the king of the South, that when he is loosed, he will attack the king of the North with nuclear and chemical weaponry; he will kill a third of humanity. But he will have underestimated the ferocity with which the king of the North, rallying the world as he does around the Cross of Calvary, will fight back.

In that thirty day period between when the king of the North declares himself God, and when Christ takes him out on day 1260, the king of the North shall do the events that are recorded in verses 40–45 of Daniel 11. It is on day 1260 when "he shall come to his end, with no one to help him" (verse 45), for it is on this day when Michael "shall arise" (12:1) and make war on Satan (Rev 12:7). The news from the east and the north that troubles the king of the North isn't the river Euphrates drying "up to prepare the way for the kings from the east" (Rev 16:12), but the "flashes of lightening, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail" of when "God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple" (Rev 11:19). The demon knows judgment has come upon him.

The brevity of the language used tends to push events together that are actually separated by days and years. For example, in the seventy week prophecy, we read:

After the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing, and the troops of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. [His — alternate reading] end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war.

Desolations are decreed. He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week, and for half of the week he shall make sacrifice and offering cease; and in their place shall be an abomination that desolates, until the decreed end is poured out upon the desolator.

(Dan 9:26–27)

Whose end comes with the earth swallowing a flood? the king of the North's. We again see his troops' destroying the city and the sanctuary, that destruction occurring prior to day 1260, but after day 1290. He shall make the daily sacrifice cease and declare himself God on day 1290, which is in the

middle of a prophetic seven year week, or pretty close—the language of the prophecy is too spare to see the thirty day month during which the king of the North wreaks havoc in Jerusalem. Yet for the language's spareness, we learn that the king of the North (not Christ) will make a strong covenant with many for one week, and from this we can contextualize who the first horseman of the Apocalypse is, and what he does (Rev 6:1–2). From day 2520 until receiving his mortal wound, the king of the North was conquering by imitating Christ. Then, from when the king of the North is mortally wounded until Christ arrives, Satan as the second beast of Revelation 13 makes people "worship the first beast, whose mortal wound had been healed" (13:12).

My case for the king of the North being the power behind visible Christianity has become stronger, but still isn't conclusive. I'll stack up additional evidence shortly.

Returning to the king of the South, we are not yet half way through seven years of Tribulation when the four demons bound at the great river Euphrates are released to kill a third of humanity. (Those *watchmen* who teach a 42 month long Tribulation err grievously as they have set themselves up to worship Satan, and the king of the North.)

About the third beast of his first vision, Daniel says, "After this, as I watched, another appeared, like a leopard. The beast had four wings of a bird on its back and four heads; and dominion was given to it" (7:6). We, in the western world, should expect this beast with his army of two myriads of myriads to attack as if it had wings. The people of his horde will believe that they see the chance to avenge centuries of wrongs, and to rid the world of the Great Satan.

The mindset of this period in the Tribulation will be one of revival. Enough has happened that people everywhere are turning to their god, and trying to get right with him. They have just experienced five months of stings. Tidal waves have washed away low-lying coastal cities. There is a shortage of freshwater and food. Nobody will be feeling very cocky. Survival will, indeed, be in question. And someone is to blame.

Even a moderate Muslim might ask, *If it isn't for the pornography of western culture, then why else would Allah be doing this to us? We have not conquered the world for Allah as we were commissioned to do, so is that the reason?* And our most moderate believer willingly shoulders a rifle. With more than a billion believers, fielding an army of 200,000,000 isn't that difficult, and their first target is the industrialized nations of the West, where woman tempt men by daring to go around undressed. And their closest targets will be in Western Europe. Germany will be hit, and will not be an influential part of any endtime coalition. Same for Spain and France. Only Russia and the United States will have the national reserves and geographical distances to absorb the attack of radical Islam as the four demons are released to kill a third of humanity.

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Revival for the nation of Israel will be returning to the animal sacrifices. Revival for Islam will be *Jehad*. Revival for the United States will be returning to blue laws, and Cotton Mather's theology, while revival for Europe, especially the Balkans and Russia, will be the chanting of rituals until in trance-like compliance to whatever the demon directs.

Revivals feed off themselves, grow and divide like cancerous tumors, until the entire culture is infected. So will it be worldwide a year or two into the Tribulation. And the worst of the troubles are still ahead; thus, revival doesn't stop, but only builds as situations worsen.

Jesus identified Himself as the shepherd in the following prophecy: "Strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered; / I [the Lord of Hosts] will turn my hand against the little ones. / In the whole land, says the Lord, / two-thirds will shall be cut off and perish, and one-third shall be left alive" (Zech 13:7-8), and this one-third "will call on my name, / and I will answer them. / I will say, 'They are my people'; / and they will say, 'The Lord is our God'" (verse 9).

The textual suggestion is that all of the little ones are the sheep that were scattered when Christ was crucified. Two-thirds of the little ones will perish. Numerically, your odds of surviving aren't any better as a saint than as an evildoer. So being a Christian in name only will do you no good. Same for being lukewarm. Or a Nicolaitan. Or spiritually asleep. Saying, Lord, Lord, won't improve your odds of surviving. Only by doing the will of God with zeal will you become part of the third that will go through trials, more than anyone will want.

If the sixth trumpet plague is the arrival of the third beast of Daniel 7, and if the seventh trumpet heralds the arrival of the fourth beast and the judgement of God, then my logic would have the fifth trumpet plague be the release of the second beast, who is told, "Arise, devour many bodies" (verse 5). But the beast doesn't entirely devour its prey since it still has three ribs in its mouth.

In the fifth trumpet plague, the locust have a king over them, a demon whose "name in Hebrew is Abaddon" (Rev 9:11). The locust will sting all of humanity who don't have the seal of God, but they aren't to kill anyone. People will seek death because of the stinging pain, but they won't die. It will seem like they are being devoured by the locust, but they won't be. They will only be tortured. And the pain will be horrific.

I don't know if Abaddon looks like a bear, but the demon's name suggests he is a destroyer, a devourer. And based upon his name and what he does by rising to devour, I will argue that he is the bear of Daniel 7.

With more text, a more decisive case could be made, pro or con. And here I must resort to that sense of wisdom that would be credited to the muse if I were a Greek. Instead, I will now claim inspiration. And you will have to judge the validity of my claim.

Only the first of the four beasts remains without an identity: he is the false prophet that will be cast into the lake of fire along with the beast, and, later, Satan. And again, I claim inspiration.

There is an internal logic which augments the inspiration: "I saw a beast rising out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads. . . . the beast . . . was like a leopard, its feet like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth" (Rev 13:1–2). The four beasts of Daniel 7 have seven heads, and ten horns (the little horn would only have appeared after the beast rose out of the sea). The bodily characteristics of this emerging beast are the same as the first three beasts of Daniel 7. Remember, concerning the fourth beast, Daniel says, "[A]s I watched, the [fourth] beast was put to death, and its body destroyed . . . As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time" (verses 11–12). So the fourth beast has no bodily characteristics to contribute. All it has is a head that has been mortally wounded: "One of its [the first beast of Revelation 13's] heads seemed to have received a death-blow, but its mortal wound had been healed" (Rev 13:3).

Backing up to Nebuchadnezzar's vision, the stone cut without hands crushes "the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold" (Dan 2:45). Since the third kingdom of bronze "shall rule over the whole earth" (verse 39), we should expect to see the body of the first beast of Revelation 13 appearing like a leopard if the bronze in Daniel 2 corresponds to the leopard in Daniel 7. Also, we should expect to find its mouth corresponding to the winged griffin who was given the mind of a man so he could speak like a man, just as Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold and would speak for the image he saw (we hear him speaking in Daniel 4:34–36). This plucked griffin/demon is the false prophet that says either directly or in paraphrase what Nebuchadnezzar did, but this demon says these words about the antiChrists instead of the true God.

The dominion or rulership of the four beasts of Daniel 7 had been taken away at the conclusion of the 11th chapter of Revelation, but Satan gives to the first beast of Revelation 13 "his power, and his throne and great authority" (verse 2), which is that of still being the king of Babylon even though he has been cast to the earth. In fact, the second beast of Revelation 13 "exercises all the authority of the first beast on its behalf" (verse 12); so not only doesn't this first beast have any authority of its own, but it can't even exercise what authority it receives from Satan. Thus, as far as authority or dominion goes, it has none of its own, and can't exercise what it borrows from Satan. It is powerless, completely. All it can do is bellow obscenities. As such, it matches perfectly the four beasts of Daniel 7, considering that these beasts are the four horns rising from the head of the he-goat that is the king of Greece and that three of these four beasts no longer have any dominion, with only the false prophet as the vocal head of the beast still viable. And this plucked griffin hasn't had any earthly dominion since the demon kings of the North and of the

South wrestled four kingdoms into two. The second demon was locked in the bottomless pit all the time the four-headed beast that is the king of the South was bound at the river Euphrates.

The lives of the first three beasts of Daniel 7 were spared for a season and a time. Prophetically, *a time* is a year. I don't know how long a season is, but as previously discussed, in Revelation 17 we find a red beast with seven heads and ten horns, which I will state emphatically are not the same horns as were on the head of the fourth beast of Daniel 7. This red beast is like the red dragon of Revelation 12:3, but they are not the same demonic alliance. The dragon is Satan. The beast, the angel says, "are seven kings, of whom five have fallen, one is living, and the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain only a little while. As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seventh, and it goes to destruction" (Rev 17:9–11).

Seven heads, seven kings, five of whom have fallen. Repeating myself so there can be no doubt, the five are the four heads of the leopard, plus the bear. The one that is is the false prophet, and the one to come seems to be the little horn of the fourth beast of Daniel 7. Satan will head his army in this fight with Christ when He comes as the all powerful Messiah. He has fresh troops from the kings of the east, ten of them, and he makes his stand at Armageddon. And the king of the North is the beast that was and is not. This is the demon who will be cast into the lake of fire for his antetype antiChrist role . . . the linguistic switch from *kings* to *beast* (Rev 17:8–11) either solidly locks my reading of the king of the North being the beast thrown into the lake of fire, or opens a door to *the beast that was and is not* being Satan; I haven't barred the door, and might actually open it in the future.

The second beast of Revelation 13 "rose out of the earth" rather than the sea, a metonym for all humanity (Rev 17:15). The transvestite whore Babylon "is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth" (17:18). Thus, for the second beast to rise out the earth when linguistically humanity is identified as being of the earth, we should find this second beast ruling over humanity, and that is, indeed, what we do find.

The loop I need to close is the king of the North being the spiritual power behind visible Christianity: the second beast of Revelation 13 "had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon" (verse 11). We have seen that horns are usually connected prophetically with kings, or rulership. And the word for *lamb* is the diminutive form, suggesting despite having horns, this beast isn't like the real Lamb of God. Of course, it isn't, because it speaks like a dragon, like Satan. So, two horns can be two antiChrists, two imitations of the real Lamb, both of the dragon. The first was the king of the North. The second is Satan, as himself, inasmuch as his is the long-haired, suffering face in the picture the world accepts as Jesus.

The true Lamb of God has "seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth" (Rev 5:6). These seven horns

are, probably, the seven stars who "are the angels of the seven churches" (1:20); He "holds the seven stars in his right hand" (2:1). By application, now, the two horns of the false lamb can also be two fallen angels, one of whom I have identified as the king of the North. The textual suggestion would have the other horn being the king of the South, but since three entities (the beast, the false prophet, and Satan) are thrown into the lake of fire, I believe the other horn is the false prophet, the plucked griffin. And I have just contradicted myself if you haven't read carefully.

What I haven't established are whether the two horns are two antiChrists—there will be two—or whether the two horns are two of the four beasts of Daniel 7. At this point (summer 2002), I cannot say for certain. My inclination is to believe that the second beast of Revelation 13 will be cast into the lake of fire in its entirety, which would have the horns being the king of the North and the plucked griffin, with the lamb being Satan. With a high degree of certainty, we can say that the second beast of Revelation 13 is Satan. With certainty we can say that the little horn of Daniel 7 and 8 is Satan after he has been cast to the earth on day 1260. The king still to come of the beast of Revelation 17 is probably Satan, but the prophetic text doesn't conclusively identify him as such although the evidence seems to support that reading. Babylon is the great city that rules over kings, but Satan as the king of Babylon also rules over kings. Thus, Satan is the king of this great city. What city today rules over kings. Rome doesn't, sorry. The Vatican as a *polis* might fit this description, but the city that truly matters is New York City, with the U.N. headquarters there, where all of the world's kings send representatives. It is the business hub of the world. Berlin isn't. Rome isn't. Tokyo isn't. Jerusalem is a stumbling block. If Moscow fell, the merchants of the world wouldn't mourn. London and Brussels are rivals to New York City, but merely rivals.

Leaving all of the above outside the inspired text, we see that the second beast of Revelation 13 "makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound had been healed" (verse 12). This second beast "deceives the inhabitants of earth" (verse 14), language that connects this beast to the dragon that is "the deceiver of the whole world" (12:9). The "whole earth followed the [first] beast. They worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?'" (13:3–4). The connection between the second beast and the dragon is now solid enough to positively identify the second beast as Satan. Knowing this, what we see is Satan giving "breath [*pneuma*] to the image of the beast so that the image could even speak and cause those who would not worship the image to be killed" (verse 15).

Question, if the beast recovers from its mortal wound, why does Satan make the image of the beast speak? Why not let the beast speak for itself? Is this because the beast can only utter "blasphemous words" (verse 5) against God since it has seen its judgment? It appears so. Thus, the beast isn't allowed

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to speak to humanity. Only its image can speak, as humanity is required "to be marked on the right hand or the forehead" (verse 16) with its mark.

The mark of the beast IS NOT 666, but rather *Chi xi stigma*, which is written in Roman characters (all that I have on my keyword) as *Xx [tattoo]*. *Chi* is written as a capital "X" like that written in *Xmas*; therefore, *Chi* or "X" becomes the name of the man, Christ, while *xi* is written as a lower case "x" and *stigma* is a fraction that has no Arabic numeral equivalent. *Stigma* can best be interpreted as the English word "tattoo." Thus, the mark of the beast is the *tattoo of Xx*, or of Christ's cross, since even as late as the 4th-Century, the "cross" still hadn't righted itself, but was written reclining as in our modern "x."

The mark of the beast is the tattoo of the Cross of Calvary; therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the image that speaks is a representation of the Cross. It is the empowered Christian Church, empowered by Satan as the antitype antiChrist.

We can now link within the biblical text the Cross, and by extension, Christianity to the king of the North and to Satan. We see this in the incomplete sentence: "I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say they are Jews and are not, but are lying" (Rev 3:9). Satan has a fellowship that claims it is spiritual Israel or *Jews*, but that fellowship lies. Christ's words, not mine.

Evangelical Christianity will be quick to say that this lying fellowship is the Roman Church, but it isn't limited to Catholics. Rather, it includes all who practice lawlessness, as Paul says of the man of perdition. This lawlessness is denying that the law of God must be kept by Christians.

Moving on (all who worship on the 8th day practice lawlessness), we see that as the antitype antiChrist, Satan will be Allah to the Muslim, Jesus to the Christian, the Messiah to the Jew, and God to the rest of the world. Only the Body of Christ will reject him as God, thereby setting the stage for disciples to fight him just as Christ did.

As I have mentioned before, three entities end up in the lake of fire: the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. When the sixth bowl of God's wrath is poured out, John "saw three foul spirits like frogs coming from the mouth of the dragon, from the mouth of the beast, and from the mouth of the false prophet. These are demonic spirits, performing signs" (Rev 16:13–14). The linguistic icon translated as spirits is the plural of *pneuma*—what goes out from Satan, the beast, and the false prophet will be their demonic breath. All three are demons. They are not humans. And I believe I have solidly established that these endtime prophecies are about the activities of demons.

People who insist upon worshiping demons (Rev 9:20) and will not quit doing so because they have been deceived by the "antetype" fulfillment of antiChrist prophecies will think they are worshiping Christ, not a demon, or demons. The rougher the situation becomes, they louder are their appeals to

"christ" to save them. Yet they will not turn to Christ and do what He says: Keep the Commandments, and have love one for another.

When the fourth beast of Daniel 7 is put to death, the little horn isn't, and the first three beasts are still around although dominion has been taken from them. Commentators have assigned the identities of Babylon, Media-Persia, and Greece to these three beasts that outlive Rome—that didn't happen. The entire teaching is errant, and needs to be jettisoned.

The ten horns of the fourth beast of Daniel 7 are still in tact when the first beast of Revelation 13 emerges. The little horn hasn't yet uprooted the three horns, for these ten horns have ten crowns, or diadems, so these ten kingdoms still have power even after the head of the fourth beast received its mortal wound. However, the little horn of Daniel 7 will appear about the time the dragon gives its throne to this first beast, and it will uproot three of those ten kingdoms.

Satan, after being cast to earth, "went off to make war on the rest of [the woman's] children, those who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus" (Rev 12:17). That means exactly how it reads. Satan is the little horn that uproots three kingdoms, or in the case of the king of the North, three liberal democracies. He is especially interested in making war on those who are saints, and where will the most saints be? The United States? a good guess.

The *watchmen* who would have us turn to God (very good advice) don't say anything about the more saints there are in this country, the more interest Satan will display in this country. And if God is going to turn his hand against the little ones and let two-thirds perish, then there won't be much divine protection for this nation unless everyone's faith catches fire.

Before quitting this subject, I want to spend additional time with Zechariah: on day 1260, Satan "poured water like a river after the woman, to sweep her away with the flood" (Rev 12:15), and the earth "swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth" (verse 16). Zechariah writes, referring to the holy ones, "They will call on my name . . . I [God] will say, 'They are my people'; / and they will say, 'The Lord is our God.'" [paragraph break] See, a day is coming when the plunder taken from you will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle. . . . Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle" (13:9–14:3). Again, note that Christ fights as on *a* day of battle, not *the* day of battle: the indefinite article is used. Nations, and by extension, the armies of those nations will be gathered against Jerusalem. A United Nations army would be armies of all nations, and these armies will surround Jerusalem, but the armies, in fact, belong to the king of the North. And the referent for the pronoun *you* and *your* of 14:1 is the holy ones of 13:9. No additional subject has been introduced. So Jerusalem isn't the referent for the pronoun, but the holy ones in Jerusalem is. So Christ's warning His

disciples to flee Jerusalem when the abomination that makes desolates is set up can be contextualized.

Usually, armies surrounding Jerusalem is taught as a sign of Christ's return, since Christ will fight against these armies. But the prophecy continues: "On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives . . . and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley. . . . And you shall flee by the valley of the Lord's mountain . . . and you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake" (verses 4–5). Physical people, not glorified saints, flee as they fled centuries earlier. Again, the referent for the pronoun *you* is the holy ones who have been refined as silver is and tested as gold is (13:8–9). These are saints who have been found worthy, but who are still physical. They constitute *the woman [who] fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, so that there she can be nourished for one thousand two hundred sixty days*. And we see this in the Song of Moses: "The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, / I will divide the spoil' . . . You [God] stretched out your right hand, / the earth swallowed them. . . . You brought them [the people God redeemed — from verse 13] in and planted them on the mountain of your own possession, / the place, O Lord, that you made your abode, / the sanctuary, O Lord, that your hands have established" (Exo 15:9, 12, 17). Moses goes from recounting what happened to Pharaoh's army to prophesying about what will happen in the future, when the earth swallows the armies pursuing the holy ones. The armies surrounding Jerusalem were intending to divide the spoil when they are swallowed up, not by the Red Sea, but by the rock cut without hands of Nebuchadnezzar's visions. The Mount of Olives is that rock cut without hands. It is split and the saints flee through the wide valley formed by the split. But when the armies surrounding Jerusalem pursue the saints into that wide valley, *the earth swallows the river that the dragon pours from his mouth*. There is a time gap of 1260 days between when the saints flee and "[t]hen the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him" (Zech 14:5). The saints for these 1260 days are planted in the sanctuary Christ has prepared with His own hands for them.

Reviewing briefly: on day 1290, the man of perdition reveals himself by taking away the regular daily sacrifice and declaring himself the Messiah. Those saints in Jerusalem are warned to immediately flee to the mountains (Matt 24:15), as the armies of this man of perdition surround Jerusalem and begin to spoil the city, looting houses and raping women. Then on day 1260, one month later, Satan is cast down (again) and goes to kill the saints who have been gathered in Jerusalem, but Christ comes to fight as on a day of battle. He splits the Mount of Olives in two, and the 144,000 saints flee through this wide fissure, which closes up on the armies pursuing them, leaving the saints in the sanctuary (or place of safety) Christ has prepared for them. The loss of these armies becomes the death blow dealt to this man of perdition. The king of the North is as good as dead, and Satan has to give the beasts/demons who have

had dominion his great power and authority to keep chaos from erupting worldwide. He acts as their conservator.

When the Mount of Olives swallows the king of the North's army, the power of the king will be broken. But the nations from which this army came will still be viable governments. The ten horns will still be in place, as this worldwide army will primarily be the forces of a ten nation coalition, headed by Russia, since Russia is the industrialized power least affected by tidal waves, by loss of fresh water and agriculture. And we come to the prophecies of Ezekiel 38 and 39, only a portion of which pertain to this scenario.

As I have written elsewhere, my contention is that if the modern descendants of the house of Israel go into national captivity, it is right here, at the 1260 day mark, when the little horn uproots three of the ten horns of the king of the North. Plus, the modern nation of Israel will not, especially if they reinstate daily sacrifices, have accepted a demon-possessed man supported by the Orthodox and Universal Churches as the Messiah. The man doesn't fit what Scripture says about the Messiah. His miracles mean nothing to the nation, and they would resist if not uprooted so modern Israel is not one of the horns uprooted. Remember, revival in the Jewish world construct isn't singing praise music, but reinstating the daily animal sacrifices. For Israelis, revival translates into resisting Christianity's polluting influences. And as long as their army is somewhat intact, it remains nuclear equipped and ready to resist invasion.

In the United States, some of the Evangelical Church and all of the Church of God will recognize this man of perdition for who he is. And some will not accept any mark from anyone, even Christ. Only a loss of national sovereignty would cause this nation to go along with an antiChrist declaring himself God. We are too used to theatre to be impressed by his miracles. But, I suspect the U.S. military will have born the brunt of the fight against the king of the South's armies—there isn't a coalition in the world that we won't join if peace is promised as the outcome of joining—and as such, with the loss of the army at Jerusalem, we won't be able to resist the Sioux if they resume hostilities.

Because Isaiah's prophecies (11th chapter) have God gathering Israel a second time, I suspect we will lose national sovereignty. But God won't have brought captivity upon us, since the first covenant with its promises and cursings was abolished at Christ's death. We, as a nation, will have brought it upon ourselves because not enough of the nation is party to the second covenant. Our escape is to turn as a nation and begin to do that which is right in all of our dealings. Calling on Christ isn't enough.

Who the second and third horns are, I don't know.

I don't know that any of the horns are the United States, but I see nowhere else that a prophesied captivity of the modern descendants of the house of Israel can occur. Two covenants are not now in effect. The first covenant (consisting of both the Sinai and the Moab covenants) has been replaced by the

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second. Promises of physical blessing and national captivity belong to the first, unless they are specifically incorporated into the second as in the case of Ezekiel 36.

As an aside, the five toes of each leg of Nebuchadnezzar's statue are married iron and clay; so five mixed toes become ten nations, five strong, five weak. Daniel says the rock crushes both the iron and the clay as well as the gold, silver and bronze. The rock cut without hands crushes the king of the North's armies, as well as what remains of the king of the South's army, so speculatively, the nations crushed include those represented by the gold (Babylon), silver (Media & Persia), bronze (Greece), the iron and the clay.

The Roman Empire doesn't appear in prophecy. Nor does the Holy Roman Empire, except as it reflects the reign of the half kingdom of the demonic king of the North.

The unifying aspect of the reign of the kings of the North and of the South is belief in an immortal soul and heaven or hell upon death. By this belief, the fourth kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar's vision can be located and followed through history.

6.

Some televangelist of renown will conclude that the mark of the beast is a computer chip, or a national ID card, or some other tentacle of an expanding national or international bureaucracy. Alarms will be sounded. Members of Congress will be called. Civil libertarians will file lawsuits. And born again Christians won't think much about accepting a small tattoo of the Cross, especially when the tattoo is applied almost instantaneously.

Does the previous paragraph sound plausible? Probably. Most likely, Christians will have begun accepting the tattoo when the king of bold countenance begins making a strong covenant with many at the beginning of the Tribulation; this is the first horseman of the Apocalypse, who comes onto the world stage conquering and to conquer (Rev 6:2) for 2520 days. Many more will accept the tattoo as a rallying symbol against the determined but undergunned Muslim fundamentalists that have overrun Europe and Africa. So when this king of bold countenance declares himself the messiah, the tattoo will have become a status symbol, indicating to all the world that its possessor is a Christian. Revival will have broken out everywhere. Getting tattooed will seem like the thing to do. Only a few will refuse the tattoo before Satan arrives on day 1260 to declare himself the true messiah.

Satan is an active fellow. Daniel says, "I watched then the noise of the arrogant words that the horn was speaking" (7:11), so Satan served as the king of the North's defense counsel. On the same day, he fights with Michael, loses, goes after the saints in Jerusalem, has his borrowed army swallowed by the

Mount of Olives, then says, *I caused it, I'm Christ*, as he makes fire come down from heaven.

Having the Cross tattooed on the back of a person's hand will seem logical, will seem like the right thing to do, especially so when the messiah—christ himself—requires it of everyone for entrance into his millennium reign here on earth, that reign beginning when the armies surrounding Jerusalem are supernaturally destroyed. And who will refuse? A few crackpots who are Jewish wannabes. Some politically unstable types who properly belong locked up. Who else? Every genuine saint whom the Father has drawn and Christ has called and who will have a part in the first resurrection.

Most readers aren't particularly interested in which demon does what although they should be, since the wrath of God will be poured out upon everyone who accepts the mark of beast (Rev 14:9–11). Most readers just won't think any of this is all that important. After all, God is love. He won't kill people who make a little mistake. . . . He won't? That's not what the back of my Bible says. I've read the end of the book. Maybe you should, too.

Keats wrote of poetry that it should be as the falling of leaves or it shouldn't come at all, meaning that if a poet has to force words into lines, then the world would be better off if the poetry were never written. The same can be said for understanding prophecy: if an understanding has to be "forced" unto the prophecy, that understanding is wrong. When it becomes time for the prophecy to be understood, its meaning will be self-evident to the person[s] to whom understanding is given. No twisting of linguistic icons and objects will be necessary. No wrenches will be needed. No reading twelve other books about the Illuminati or the Council on Foreign Relations or David Rockefeller will be needed. The prophetic pieces will snap together without force, without tools, without misalignments or the need for spiritual caulk.

To review what I know so far: the course of history from Nebuchadnezzar forward has him being replaced by Media Persia, which is replaced by Greece, which is replaced by the reign of the kings of the North and of the South, then by Christ's Millennium reign. All of these "powers" are theocracies. The four horns of Daniel 8 are the four beasts of Daniel 7. The emergence of the second, third and fourth beasts of Daniel 7 are the fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpet plagues of Revelation. The first beast of Daniel 7 is the false prophet. The third beast is the four-headed king of the South, who had been bound at the river Euphrates. The fourth beast is the king of the North, the spiritual power behind the Cross; he has stomped and trampled the earth under the guise of the Cross since the gospel of Constantine officially replaced the gospel of Christ in 325 A.D.

The king of the South is the spiritual power behind Islam. These four demons have been bound until a precise, appointed time, when they will be loosed to kill a third of humanity. But the king of the North shall come at them with fury as he rallies world support by declaring himself the messiah. At

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Christ's return, he is the beast that will be cast into the lake of fire, along with the false prophet. Satan will join them in the lake of fire after he does a work of deception at the end of the Millennium. And from the description in Ezekiel 28:18–19, and in Daniel 7:11, there is reason to believe that all three will be destroyed by fire and will cease to exist. They will not be forever tormented in a lake of fire which itself doesn't last forever; they will be burned unto ashes, with the Father bringing fire out from their bellies to utterly consume them.

The mark of the beast (*Chi xi stigma*) is the tattoo of the Cross of Calvary—and by recognition of what constitutes the mark of the beast, we can firmly link greater Christianity to the two antiChrists, the antetype king of the North and the antetype Satan, who is also the little horn of both Daniel 7 and 8. Satan is the second beast of Revelation 13; he is the spiritual king of Babylon; he is the dragon who empowers the defeated first beast of Revelation 13; and he is cast to earth on day 1260.

The rock cut without hands of Nebuchadnezzar's vision is the split Mount of Olives which swallows the armies of the king of the North as they pursue the saints in day 1260, when Christ comes to fight as on *a* [indefinite article] day of battle. Moses prophesied about this event in his song (Exod 15:12–18), as well as Daniel, Zechariah, and Christ in Revelation.

Armies surround Jerusalem beginning on day 1290, when saints in the city are to flee to the hills without even returning to their houses to get coats. It is on this day when the man of perdition (the king of the North possessing a human being) declares himself god; he takes away the "daily," usually understood to mean the daily sacrifice, which was probably reinstated on day 1335.

What else can I say? I have addressed the seven trumpet plagues of the Tribulation—the meteor will do far more damage than most prophecy experts have anticipated. A tsunami will race away from the impact point at five hundred miles per hour; this tsunami can be as high as 2,000 feet and carry inland 200 miles with a relatively small meteor. If the meteor hits in the North Atlantic, it will destroy most of industrialized Europe. If it hits in the Mediterranean, islands will be washed bare. The entire underbelly of Europe will cease to exist, and I don't know the extent of the damage that will occur to North Africa and the coastal areas of the Middle East. My guess is that almost the entire nation of Israel will be lost, the reason I think the strike is likely to occur in the Atlantic. If that is the case, America's eastern seaboard will be heavily damaged.

Of course, it is possible the strike will occur in the Pacific or Indian Oceans, which might be why it takes so long for the kings of the east to send armies in support of the antiChrist. The least amount of societal damage would probably be from a strike in the South Atlantic, not that there wouldn't still be a horrific loss of life.

The king of the North's ten nation coalition is matched by the king of the South having a ten nation alliance. With both kings, a strong nation is married to a weak nation. For example, since Russia seems to be the central nation in the king of the North's coalition, the toe represented by Russia will actually be composed of, say, Belarus and Russia. Or Georgia and Russia. Two nations, one toe of iron and clay. Another possible example would be the United States and Canada. Again, two nations married together as one toe. For the king of the South, an example might be Egypt and Ethiopia, or Iraq and Yemen. And the reason I haven't named more nations is that Turkey and Iran are troubling. They are Islamic nations that might be part of the king of the North's coalition. I don't have a revelation as to how to here read the biblical text, so while I can see nations mentioned, I don't today (summer of 2002) know how to handle the information. Again, prophetic understanding should come as the falling of leaves. For me, it hasn't concerning the modern identities of some ancient nations. It is best for me to say, I don't know—I see them named in the biblical text, but I can't identify them today. Their identities will have to wait as I have to wait to know what the seven thunders said. There is more revealing to come. Hopefully, I will have a part in unmasking the future.

I don't want to get ahead of God as other biblical commentators have. When the Father wants the Church to know how to read a prophecy, He will give that knowledge. The work I have before me is partially to undo the damage caused by Herbert Armstrong's dynamic but uninspired reading of prophecy. The genuine sheep will hear Christ's voice in mine; the goats will be out there watching for yet another revival of the Holy Roman Empire.

I have spent much of my life hunting deer. As a sixteen year old emancipated minor, I lived on venison when I was too young to get a real job. I developed some bad habits, the foremost of which was the extension of deer season, a habit that was carried into my middle 20s, before I finally tired of always looking over my shoulder. But before I broke the habit, I had three daughters and a couple of milk goats. When I rose before daylight in the morning, I'd check those goats. If they were up and about, I knew deer would be up and moving about, but if those goats were bedded down, I knew I would have to kick deer out of their beds. The behavior of those domestic goats was a reliable indicator of what was occurring in the wild. Likewise, the behavior of those goats that have set themselves up as *watchmen* of world events for the Church of God is a reliable indicator of the spiritual health of the Body of Christ. When those goats prosper, the Body is sick. Looking for a sign and short on love—a better lyricist might be able to write a hit song about the Body's lack of faith when the *watchmen* can afford additional television time and more bundles of slick magazines to be given away. The *watchmen* hawk a potential trade war between Europe and America as a sure sign of the forthcoming revival of the Roman Empire. Their message is consistent, and has been consistently wrong, but these goats continue to mill about in the

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predawn darkness, just as the world mills about, ignorant and blind and prey to silver-haired wolves with scope-sighted rifles and the duplicity of Jacob, who tricked his own father into blessing him.

The *watchmen* don't need much encouragement to continue. All they need is dollars. Faith has acquired a pricetag, discounted of course in the heartland of America where Wal*Mart took root. The tithes of a thousand believers is enough to support one weekly television broadcast. A second thousand will produce a slick, monthly magazine. A third thousand will support a tiny Bible college, in which additional *watchmen* can be trained in how to parrot the partyline: *Polly wants a cracker*. Any cracker will do, as long as a job is held and tithes are paid and not too many questions are asked.

Am I being harsh? Read what Jesus said of Pharisees in the 23rd chapter of Matthew. The *watchmen* are modern Pharisees.

Perhaps the genuine sheep of Christ's flock are bedded down, secure in their faith that their shepherd will guide and protect them as world events unfold. Perhaps they neither fret nor bleat, but quietly chew their cud. At least I hope so, for many of them are no longer in fellowships anywhere. I hope they haven't been stampeded over cliffs and down dry arroyos. If they have been, the shepherds Christ left in charge face an accounting that will likely cost them their spiritual lives.

These shepherds know who they are. They feel certain about their decision to become part of the king of the North's management team. And I will borrow a rifle from the wolves with which to hunt down these shepherds as if they were sheep-killing cur dogs, running with a pack of coyotes that have pissed all over themselves as if a little more stink will somehow make them more attractive to television audiences.

Jesus came as a prophet, not as the all powerful, world-ruling Messiah that Pharisees expected, not as the King of the Jews, how the Magi identified Him. He acknowledged the validity of the claim about being King of the Jews to Pilate before He was crucified, but while here, He self-identified Himself as a prophet, and perhaps Jesus' teachings as a prophet are the most poorly understood aspect of His earthly ministry. Generations of intelligent men have overlaid their brilliance on Jesus' prophecies, and have reasoned some of the silliest concepts imaginable into existence. Their reasoning has been that all things are understandable since the Comforter was given to the saints, but Scriptural evidence suggests otherwise since John concluded, from the number of little antichrists who were teaching false doctrine, that he was living at the end of the age. By our use of the language John was obviously not living at the end of the age. But John wrote his epistles before Christ gave him His revelations of future events.

What seems to be poorly understood by many well-intended prophecy experts is that Satan isn't trying to gain control of human governments; he was

given that control by Elohim at the beginning of this demonstration project. If Satan wanted, as ruler of this world, he could use spiritual force to establish the reign of a single government today, or yesterday. Doing so didn't serve his purpose yesterday. It must be remembered, he is still at war with Elohim even though he has been defeated. He is now, as if he were in a chess match, playing for a draw instead of a win. If he can stalemate Elohim's plans for the Elect by demonstrating that even the Elect, when tutored and warned by the Logos/Christ, can be deceived by him, he can argue that in fairness redemption must be offered to the demons. All of the saints who have died in faith don't count; they are dead. They were merely pawns in a demonstration of collectivism or feudalism or some other *ism*. Who counts are the saints who will be tested at the time of the end as Job was tested, which God also allowed. Two-thirds of the saints will be cut off and will perish, but the third who will be put into the fire and refined as silver is and tested as gold is (Zech 13:8-9) are the ones who will from inside the creation defeat Satan. If they can be convinced to either worship the antetype antiChrist, or later, to accept the mark of the beast, then Satan has the basis for a stalemate argument. But they will not worship either the beast or the dragon, for they will know who both are. Just as the saints can be recognized by the demons because of the saints having the earnest of spiritual life, the saints can recognize the demons because Elohim has given the saints the necessary prophecies that reveal demonic plans. So the endtime struggle between the Elect and Satan will be on a somewhat level though bloody playing field.

I cannot emphasize this too much: prophecies about the time of the end are sealed and secret until that period of time. They cannot be understood until then. Seventy years ago wasn't the time of the end. More than a generation passed. So a reading of prophecies from seventy years ago isn't the endtime understanding necessary to defeat Satan, or to resist accepting the mark of the beast. And humanity has the psychological ability to pray for an end to human suffering to come, yet to believe that everything will continue as it always has been. We might know circumstances of any kind will change, but we somehow deny that change will occur. We tend not to believe what we know, meaning that we can know the mark of the beast is the tattoo of the Cross, but when it comes time to actually receive that mark, we won't really object much because we cannot accept the concept that humanity has been worshiping demons, not God. That idea doesn't seem right, so no amount of information will truly negate our rejection of the concept. Ultimately, it makes no difference what the Bible says. All that matters is what seems right. And if you want to experimentally analyze the nature of a divine delusion, here is your opening to examine your own mental processes. Paul writes, "For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion, leading them to believe what is false, so that all who have not believed the truth but took pleasure in unrighteousness will be

condemned" (2 Thess 2:11–12). We also see God having done this in Ezekiel 20:25–26. Even with the truth obvious before them, even with humanity recognizing the truth as the truth, humanity will not believe what it knows is the truth when a delusion has been sent. This is the state of affairs right now concerning Christianity. The delusion Paul references was sent in the 2nd and 3rd Centuries. It was in place and formalized in the 4th-Century. Since that time, unless the Father removes you from under this delusion, you can recognize spiritual truth; you can agree that a Scripture should be read in a particular way; but you will not believe your own mind. You are like the person who says, *I know I ought to be keeping the Sabbath on Saturday, but God will understand*, when what God understands is the person has condemned him or herself to being His enemy. God doesn't need you. He doesn't need more praise singers. He doesn't need anything you have, with one exception. If you have set your "will" to always do that which is right, realizing that you have failed, will fail, and will continue to fail, but nevertheless, your choice is to do right, your decision is to always do what is right, your desire is to always do what is right until the habit of choosing to do that which is right has sculpted your character into one that without conscious thought chooses to do that which is right to the best of your knowledge—if you have become this person, then God can give to you a glorified body and offer to you adoption into His family so that you will be like Him. He can trust you with real power, for He knows you will always choose to do what is right. You aren't a rebel. You aren't doubleminded. Your word is your bond. The one thing God cannot create directly is the character to always do what is right. He created Lucifer perfect, and He could create additional Lucifers perfect in knowledge and in character, but Lucifer didn't stay perfect. In fact, his perfection produced the flaw that led to his rebellion against God. So with Satan's rebellion came the opportunity for God to produce indirectly inner character like His own. God always chooses to do what is right. He is not human. His reasoning is not human. But His character and His thought processes are understandable by us, since we have been created in His image.

The one and the only thing you have that God wants is your decision making process to always do that which is right.

Understanding prophecy, now, becomes a tool God uses to establish His credibility with us. That is of concern to Him, for He wants us to take that credibility and turn it into action, the ongoing acts of choosing to do right. God expects works from us. Our works are of no value to Him. Our good deeds are truly less than nothing to Him. But our decision making process to do those deeds is of great importance to Him. Grace covers our failures, so all we have to do is to decide to do what is right, and act on those decisions.

Concerning endtime prophecy in particular, Christ is arming saints with the knowledge needed to fight against Satan and his lieutenants. Those of us who remain alive into and through the Tribulation will have to fight Satan just as

Christ did; therefore, the Father has upped the amount of credibility in circulation, an awkward way of saying that as we see events unfold exactly as foretold, our faith must sharply increase as physical threats to our bodies increase.

We fight Satan by not worshiping him. We have no bombs nor artillery pieces that will kill him. We can't harm him in any way, except to not worship him. As far as we know, he deceived every angel under him. He has deceived the entire world. If a drawn saint rejects Satan's broadcast of deception, then that saint has established a qualitative difference between him- or herself and the angels. And if you want to see a little of the mind of God in action, consider how God uses Satan's broadcast of rebellion. By spiritually modifying a person just a little, God turns Satan's broadcast of rebellion against Satan. The more powerfully Satan broadcasts rebellion at a drawn disciple to get the disciple to reject God, the stronger is the disciple's rebellion against Satan. The disciple feeds on Satan's broadcast of rebellion. If Satan ignores the disciple, then the disciple grows slowly in grace and knowledge, developing the perfection necessary by having to use his or her decision making process against the person's flesh. But if Satan singles the person out for special attention, the aura of rebellion surrounding Satan causes a spiritual feedback of rebellion. In other words, the harder Satan tries to make the person rebel against God, the greater the disciple rebels all right, but rebels against Satan. With the spiritual modification that the Father makes when He draws a disciple, Satan's transmission of rebellion is beamed directly back at him.

The primary reason genuine disciples fall away is lethargy. Satan ignores them. Everything goes along easy for them. No health problems. No serious money problems. No problems of any kind. And the person neglects to take God seriously. Before too many years pass, Christ, who is in charge of our salvation, decides the only way to save the disciple's spiritual life is to make his or her physical life more difficult. If you have been in the Church for very many years, you, too, have seen this pattern. It's really predictable—and avoidable, maybe.

In the Tribulation, hundreds of thousands and possibly millions of disciples will be drawn by the Father. Life will not be easy. Human survival will be at issue. And for the last three and a half years of the Tribulation, Satan will be here on earth, posing as the Messiah. He won't come as a demon possessing a man, but as a spirit being. It was the king of the North who came possessing a man.

I suspect that nearly everyone who reads this far into this book has been drawn by the Father. What this means for each of you is that this is your chance for salvation. If you do nothing, you might be called forth in the great White Throne Judgment, when all of humanity who hasn't previously been called will be offered salvation, but that is a bet you will be making with God. Besides, the better promises are to the firstfruits, those who will be glorified at

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Christ's return as the all powerful Messiah. Count the costs—there will be high cost for discipleship in the Tribulation—and see if it doesn't make more sense to surrender to Christ today. Look at what is being offered to disciples who have the seal of God in the Tribulation as opposed to what is offered to those who bear the mark of the beast. Of course, the Tribulation might not start tomorrow; so look at the cost of living by the law of God as opposed to living however you feel like. Which way will better produce longterm happiness? This is your decision. I've already made mine. And sitting before us is greater Christianity saying all you have to do is accept Jesus' death on the Cross of Calvary. They will probably even offer to tattoo you for nothing when the time comes. Their way certainly won't "set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law" (Matt 10:35). So, it's your decision. You count the costs. You will have to live and die by your decision.

7.

When I find my own writing dense and pedantic, I can imagine how others find it, so I want to address the same prophecies in a little more relaxed but perhaps less precise prose.

In the third year of Cyrus's reign, Daniel apparently asked God to show him what would become of the house of Judah, then mostly still in captivity at Babylon. He humbled himself before God, and continued to humble himself for three weeks. And his request for understanding was heard by God, but the demonic rulers resisted the giving of understanding to him. The textual assumption is that God's intention was to withhold the information revealed in Daniel 11 until the time of the end, that Daniel became privy to this revelation because of his request for understanding, honored because he was greatly loved by God. Understanding, however, wasn't given to him. Rather, what was given was acknowledgment of his request for understanding and an outline of sealed historical events.

Jesus as the Lamb of God was the prophet who would reveal what would happened to spiritual Israel at the time of the end. Most of the revealing is in the Book of Revelation, but some of it is in His Olivet discourse, which in the Greek begins with Jesus warning His disciples not to mislead. Jesus wasn't worried about them being deceived; rather, He was concerned about them becoming part of the many who would come in His name and deceive many. Jesus said in Matthew's account that the events between verses 4 through 7 are "but the beginning of the birth pangs" (24:8). The subject under discussion is *the end of the age*, not what would happen through history although the passage can be read that way. However, after the publication or spread of the gospel throughout the world, "then the end will come" (verse 14). The event that marks the beginning of the end is the spread of the gospel.

A little outside-of-the-text reasoning is here necessary: did the original disciples spread the gospel? Jesus sent out His twelve disciples with instructions to go "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 10:6), and we know that "Peter had been entrusted with the gospel for the circumcised" (Gal 2:7), so we can assume that in the 1st-Century the gospel was taken to the then not-so-lost houses of Israel that had been scattered throughout the world as Steven M. Collins (among other writers) has persuasively argued. To what part of the world was the gospel not taken in the 1st, or in the 4th Centuries? How about in the 19th and 20th Centuries? And the end of the age still hasn't come. An element in what Jesus said to his disciples is missing, and that element is again the subject under discussion *the end of the age*. The gospel will be taken worldwide a final time just prior to the setting up of the "desolating sacrilege" (Matt 24:15). Matthew 24:14 is the bookend to Revelation 10:11. Both passages reference the same taking of the gospel to the world. Endtime disciples have a work to do. "The wise among the people shall give understanding to many" (Dan 11:33), the passage set at the time when the king of the North "shall abolish the regular burnt offering and set up the abomination that makes desolate" (verse 31). So Matthew 24:14, Daniel 11:33, and Revelation 10:11 all address a work that will be done by endtime saints. This work is also addressed indirectly in, "I know your works. Look, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut" (Rev 3:8). The sense of the Greek is different: Christ seems to be saying, *I am now opening a door which no man can shut*. The translators, though, didn't understand the literary trope used to seal Revelation, so the translators couldn't understand the time setting for when the door would be opened. The door opens in the day of the Lord, not until then.

Allow me to again pause: I have argued that Revelation has been sealed by a literary trope, and it has been. However, what I haven't argued in detail is when that sealing is removed, as I have "read" a portion of the book, coming at it from Daniel's prophecies that are sealed only until the generic *time of the end*, which we have entered as of January 2002. What I haven't said is that the day of the Lord begins on day 1260. I have said the scene we see in Daniel 7:9–14 is the same scene we see in Revelation 11:15–19. This is also the scene we see in Revelation chapters 4 & 5. So until the day of the Lord arrives, the literary trope used to seal Revelation only allows us to look at a portion of the scroll which Christ will unseal on day 1260. Remember, the scroll is "written on the inside and on the back" (Rev 5:1). I can only read the back of the still sealed scroll, but the back is the portion that addresses the letters to the seven churches and the trumpet plagues. Tell me, if you can, when the third woe begins and ends? That part of the scroll is under the seals, which haven't yet been removed. There is a lot of revelation still to come; plus, a lot of prophesying will occur. I'm only on the leading edge of what will be an avalanche of knowledge.

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Returning to the letters to the churches: unlike what the *watchmen* teach in their ignorance, the seven churches of Revelation 2 & 3 are not seven eras of a single true church, but are seven endtime fellowships with at least seven administrations. The exact structure of each fellowship isn't given (and probably isn't hidden under a seal). I will here state for posterity that I am of the characteristic fellowship of the church in Philadelphia; I am a Puritan, with love for drawn disciples ensnared within the greater Christian church. As such, I am willing to butt heads with the big boys, taking lumps when I do so. I can't help but win. The fight really isn't fair. Who am I for the big boys within greater Christianity to invest resources to try and defeat? If they ignore what I write, the sheep these big boys are presently deceiving will hear Christ's voice in mine and enter the fold where they belong. If the big boys want to take me on, they are really taking on Christ. He's the One who's opening the door. I certainly don't want to get crosswise with Him; for what will happen is already recorded: "I [Christ] will make those of the synagogue of Satan . . . come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you" (Rev 3:9).

Christ loves the church in Philadelphia because the church has enough love not only for its own, but for its enemies that it will take on the synagogue of Satan in the mismatch of all time. And it will prevail to the extent that probably a third of greater Christianity will quit worshiping demons and come to God. That's a sizeable victory, all because the church in Philadelphia has enough love to see individual faces in the sea of humanity that presently worships demons—and the church in Philadelphia isn't willing that any perish, even among those who are today its enemies.

Unfortunately, one of the *watchmen* who has deified Herbert Armstrong has misappropriated the name, and now blasphemes God by his lack of love, a minor problem for the church in its course of history. This particular *watchman* is such a poor reader of texts that he actually sounds silly in print and during his telecasts which I have occasionally seen. He is a false prophet and he misleads his flock. I would take his flock away from him and put them with an honest shepherd if that decision were mine, and not Christ's. As it is, I will lob this paragraph at him, then pray for him. I will even go beyond that; I'll offer to sell him the eye salve he needs so he can finally acquire the spiritual vision he now thinks he has. I'd give it to him gratis, but he wouldn't value it enough to use it.

I didn't grow up with touchy-feely love; I haven't practiced such love much since. Rather, I grew up within a community that would get out of bed in the middle of the night to help pull their neighbor out of the ditch, even when it was pouring down rain, and Don Schilling had to hook his rig in front of Dennis Briley's to pull my Bronco out of a creek. Love and respect were entwined. It was a hard country, filled with hard people, each with huge reservoirs of love that were only visible in times of crisis. It was this land that

pulled together after 9/11. I don't want to see any of it experience foreign occupation, or the wrath of God. It doesn't have to. It is unnamed prophetically, for its fate isn't sealed.

Three of ten horns of the king of the North's coalition will be supernaturally overturned on day 1260 by Satan. The other seven will be destroyed by God when He puts hooks in their jaws to drag them against the modern descendants of the ancient houses of Israel. If the United States is among those ten horns, we will be overturned—the difficulty in understanding Ezekiel 38 & 39 is in knowing whether we are defeated or not. In both scenarios (us as a part of the king of the North's coalition, and us as not a part), we will probably be attacked by the seven horns of the king of the North. It isn't the modern nation of Israel that will be attacked by Gog and Magog, but the descendants of the northern house of Israel. Those descendants are in North America, and in Northern Europe. In both areas, they live in unwalled cities. Modern Judea doesn't. The modern nation of Israel lives in walled cities because of the Palestinian threat. So if the tsunami doesn't wipe out coastal Europe (the second trumpet plague), and if the Islamic invasion doesn't destroy Europe (the sixth trumpet plague), then the possibility exists for Satan to use the nations that formed the king of the North's coalition against Europe, which isn't anyplace I will want to be during the Tribulation.

That leaves the fate of the United States in our hands, with big name televangelists lying to the nation about Jews still being in a covenant relationship with God, thereby having a birthright to the land of Judea. In what covenant relationship? The first covenant ended at Calvary. The Jerusalem conference (Acts 15) settled the question of many nations coming from Abraham: with the abolishment of circumcision, the preferential treatment of Abraham's seed ended. The world is now one new humanity (Eph 2:15). Therefore, all of the old covenant prophecies that relate to national blessings and cursings were abolished. The covenant basis for the prophecies ended. The *watchmen* are wrong. The televangelists are wrong. And somebody has to call a spade by its proper name.

The United States could turn toward God, repent of its lawlessness, and come under the protection of God, but we have to quit worshiping demons first. So the hard love in which I matured, now having been cultivated by Christ for thirty years, requires that I enter this mismatch of all time: the church in Philadelphia against greater Christianity. I know who's on my side. As I said, the fight really isn't fair. We'll lose a few rounds, take some hits, but we'll be the only ones standing at the end of the Tribulation. Yes, the churches of God will be bloodied for most of all seven years—only 144,000 are in the place prepared by Christ—but we'll have all eternity to celebrate the victory, and we'll celebrate it with a lot of saints who wouldn't be there if the church in Philadelphia hadn't been willing to start the fight for purity when Christ opens the door.

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Previously, I mentioned Babylon as being "the great city that rules over the kings of the earth" (Rev 17:18), and I wondered what city might that be if not New York City. The *watchmen* would have us believe the city is Rome, but again, let's be realistic. What kings or nations does Rome rule over? How about France? Does Rome rule France through the auspices of the Roman Church. No. Let's consider Germany. Norway. Sweden. Finland. Russia. Does the Roman Church rule over Lutherans, or over the Russian Orthodox Church? No. So Rome, and by extension, the Roman Church really doesn't rule over very many kings, certainly not the kings of the earth.

The time setting for this identifying clause *the great city that rules over the kings of the earth* is after Satan has come as the antitype antiChrist, after he has required the world to accept the mark of the beast, after the armies of the king of the North have been destroyed. So the city could be Jerusalem. But let's look at this great city's descriptive clauses: "And all shipmasters and seafarers, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning" (Rev 18:17). The phrase *stood far off* when referring to ships usually means that the ship didn't dock, but remained in the harbor for whatever reasons. So while not conclusive, this phrasing about seamasters would indicate that Babylon is a port city with a large enough harbor that ships can stand off some considerable distance from the docks. It would preclude the city from being landlocked as Moscow is, or Berlin. Of course, this phrasing of standing off is also used for kings and merchants, but the phrasing is a nautical term.

"And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore" (Rev 18:11) — this clause indicates Babylon is not only a mercantile center, but the prime one in the world. The cargo listed is diversified. If Rome collapsed, would that affect car sales in America, or diamond sales, or the price and availability of steel? No. The collapse of what city would? How was world trade effected on 9/11? Is there any city other than New York which would similarly impact world trade if it fell?

What world city says in its heart, "I rule as a queen; / I am no widow, / and I will never see grief" (Rev 18:7)? Is this an attitude of New Yorkers, especially after 9/11? Does Rome say it will never see grief? Dad was at Anzio, and was among the very first Allied troops to enter Rome. The city knows grief. It wasn't defiant. Dad actually had to pull back and wait for Patton to roll his tanks through city streets. Rome had an altogether different attitude than New York displayed post 9/11 and continues to display.

Cities acquire attitudes, a subject I know less about than many others. I have spent a little time in Anchorage and in San Francisco; I am conversant with writers who live in cities as I have lived in the hills of Oregon, and along the beaches of Alaska. So I write with only a little authority about how a city as a collective entity acquires a particular mindset. I have to rely upon others to

tell me if another world city thinks of herself in the same elitist frame of reference as New York does.

"And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her" (Rev 18:8) — in what city do the kings of the earth live in luxury? Many kings go to Rome, but how many live there? How many have apartments there? How many U.N. headquarters are there?

When all of the passages about "'Babylon the great, mother of whores and of earth's abominations'" (Rev 18:5) are collected, we still don't have an exact identity for this great city, but we can rule out all but one city, New York. The destruction that comes best fits the detonation of a nuclear bomb, if not caused by a supernatural energy burst.

In my reading of the prophecies pertaining to the king of the North's coalition, and of Satan's arrival as the little horn of Daniel 7 & 8, the nations derived from the ancient house of Israel aren't specifically mentioned. And since the curses of the old covenant no longer pertain to the modern descendants of the northern house of Israel, God will not bring national captivity upon America or upon anyone else (sorry, *watchmen*, you don't understand prophecy). Therefore, since it's unlikely that a nation the size and the power of the United States to have been ignored in endtime prophecies, the only places we might be identified with any degree of probability is as an overturned horn of the king of the North's coalition, and as the Israel that dwells in unwalled cities when attacked by Gog, the chief nation in the king of the North's coalition. New York City is technically not a *polis*, but God might treat the city as one since its values are actually alien to the values of the nation's heartland. New York City, and for that matter, all of the U.S. eastern seaboard tends to scoff at the Bible Belt that buckles, I've been told, in Springfield, Missouri.

The only protection from God's wrath is being in a covenant relationship with God. Even then, a genuine saint is likely to experience far more of Satan's wrath than they expected when they initially signed on. As a nation, the United States (and Canada) cannot expect God to save it. God's focus and relationships are with individuals. That said, if enough individuals are in strong covenant relationships with God, the protective hedge placed around these individuals might cause the nation's heartland to be spared devastation. There are no guarantees, though. What God does is what He will choose to do. Jesus says, referencing the middle of the Tribulation, "And if those days had not been cut short, no one would be saved [alive]; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short" (Matt 24:22). That is descriptive without giving any details. Once the king of the North sets himself up as god, he will go after every saint, with the intention of leaving none alive. But for the elect's sake, after thirty days, on day 1260, Christ fights as on *a* day of battle. The textual suggestion is that if He allowed the king of the North to continue for longer,

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no saint would survive. There would then be no reason for Christ to spare anyone. Christ would wipe out humanity, as He avenges every wrong that has ever been committed.

Because Christ cuts off the king of the North's reign early and because Satan essentially has his fangs pulled (Rev 14:13 — I discuss this passage in *A Philadelphia Apologetic*), saints will survive both *in situ* and in the sanctuary prepared for the 144,000.

Can I provide more details about what will happen than I have? Yes, and I'll think of what more I could have said as I'm signing a book. It is extremely humbling to think that I'm reading these prophecies for really the first time. Certainly there will be many scholars and self-identified experts who will insist that I'm wrong. They will drag Rome into the biblical text as if the empire were a road-killed turtle, its neck stretched, its shell squashed, its armies speaking German, and its foreign policy hidden within a mumbled Latin mass, no longer uttered. They will claim that I have cast lines of braided metaphors, each snarling like the village dogs I caught with a little octopus and fifty hooks. My sentences have made no sense to them so far. Now let them struggle with "fifty hooks," a sentence from a year in Dutch Harbor, where my Howland ancestors made and lost fortunes whaling. A forefather arrived with Separatists. I shall someday visit with him, and ask why they stole the corn.

Satan offers to Christianity in the king of the North an antichrist figure most fundamentalists will easily recognize. Then he comes himself as the genuine antiChrist, announcing that his Millennium reign has begun. The teachings of the various splinters of the Church of God today has Christ arriving at this very moment in history. And Satan, identifying himself as the returned Messiah, will force all to accept his mark, the cross of Calvary, or be martyred. He will deceive the saints if that were possible. The reason it isn't possible is that Jesus has revealed Satan's deception to the disciples who hear His voice in mine, and in others.

A couple of principles for endtime biblical exegesis can now be stated: first, the emphasis should be on Greek philosophy and systems of governance, not on Roman systems. Second, the reader of endtime prophecies should understand that these prophecies exist to identify demons and their warrings against one another and against Elohim. We won't be able to see these demons, or even know they exist with two notable exceptions. When the first beast of Daniel 7 has his wings plucked, stands upright like a man, and is given the mind of a man to fulfill his role as the false prophet, prophesying that the antiChrist is really the returned Messiah, the world will see a demon appear as a man. The second opportunity the world will have to see demons as men will be when the three foul spirits proceed from the mouths of the dragon, the beast [actually, the fourth beast of Daniel 7], and the false prophet [the first beast of Daniel 7]. These three foul spirits are identified as frogs, amphibians that live in two worlds; and like frogs that live in water and on land, these demons will live

as humans with supernatural powers so that they can deceive the kings of the earth, and cause those kings to gather at Armageddon to fight against Christ in a one hour long battle.

The ten horns of the fourth beast of Daniel 7 are ten democracies that control the lands Greeks inhabited, which includes North America, according to Plutarch's translation of a Carthaginian parchment he found in the ruins of old Carthage that had sailing routes and times to New England via the northern route: *sail northwestward from Britain towards where the sun sets in midsummer five days; then pass three island groups equidistant from one another and from Ogygia, which lies in the arms of the ocean; then continue another 5000 stades west and reach Epeiros, the continent that rims the great ocean; then sail along the coast southward, past the frozen sea [Davis Strait, between Labrador and Greenland], and come to the land where Greeks have intermarried with barbarians* (from Barry Fell's *Saga America*). Three of these democracies are uprooted by Satan on or after (progressing backwards) day 1260. These three nations could include the primary Israelite democracies, the United States, and Great Britain.

The Church of God as well as many Evangelical denominations would never sleep with the Roman Holy See and won't be deceived by an antichrist associated with Catholicism. But these Christians are looking for Christ to return at the very moment in history when Satan appears as "the Messiah," demanding all to bear a tattoo of the Cross of Calvary, the means of torturing Jesus to death. It is no wonder that all who have this mark of the beast will be an enemy of the returned Jesus. Having that mark is like waving a red flag while chanting, *This is how we killed you*.

The ten horns of the beast of Revelation 17 receive power for their one hour only after Christ destroys Gog and Magog, and the remnant of the king of the North's coalition; so these ten horns of Revelation 17 are not the ten horns of Daniel 7, or of Revelation 13. These ten kings of Revelation 17 don't come to power until shortly before the battle at Armageddon begins; they are probably the ten dominant military powers then on the world stage, which are the kings of the East. They will not, after the bowls of God's wrath are poured out, be a ten nation European combine.

At the moment, the *watchmen* use a Babylon-Rome axis to explain endtime prophecies. As such, they miss the significance of the he-goat of Daniel 8, identified as the king of Greece. That metaphorical king of Greece's metonymical influence has never been replaced by any other demon's mastery of his fellow demons. The axis that best explains endtime prophecies would be one that runs from the doctrine of the immortal soul to self-determination within a democratic political system. It is not a horizontal axis through history, but rather, a vertical axis through philosophy.

Most all biblical prophecy has an endtime setting. These prophecies have been given to arm the Elect in their fight with Satan. Just as Christ had to overcome Satan, so will the Elect have to overcome Satan. These prophecies

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were not needed for salvation seven centuries ago, nor even a century ago. They will, however, be needed when demons appear as men; they will be the Elect's means of keeping track of the players. The demons are from other unfurled dimensions. The earnest of eternal life that all of the Elect has exists in those same dimensions, but our conscious minds do not. Our thoughts are chemically generated, electrical impulses, and as such, our thoughts are part of what has been created physical. We cannot enter these other dimensions; we cannot recognize angels or demons when they appear as humans. We don't see their amphibian natures. The only way for us to fight demons isn't to use swords or bullets against what appears as their physical bodies, but for us to deny them the one thing they need for victory, our worship of them. By denying the demons worship (most of humanity won't as evidenced by Revelation 9:20 and 16:11), the demons lose their argument for redemption being offered to them. They will then be unable to stalemate Elohim's plan to reproduce Themselves.

The demons can identify all of the Elect by the Elect having the earnest of eternal life, that life in the same dimensions as demons. We are literally God fetuses, not yet born from above but as much a part of Elohim as a human fetus is a part of his or her parents' family. Endtime prophecies exist for us to make some sense of what will occur or is occurring in these dimensions we cannot discover by our own observation. The human birth process isn't directly analogous to the spiritual birth process, because for most of the saints that have ever lived there is a cocoon stage that corresponds with having his or her name written in the book of life. Except for the saints still alive when Christ returns as the all powerful Messiah, that earnest of eternal life which the saints developed while alive as a human being is being metaphorically kept in the book of life. Only saints alive when Christ returns will not go through this cocoon stage in suspended development.

Because the demons can recognize the saints by their earnest of eternal life, endtime prophecies have been given so the saints can recognize the demons. The final battle will be as Job's was against Satan, long and with friends and spouses being employed by Satan to encourage surrender. It can be won—Satan won't win if he martyrs every one of the saints—but victory will be as difficult for us as it was for Jesus. This will not be a case of Jesus having done everything for us. This will be the case of Jesus having armed us and having sent us into His fight against demons. He has won the war. We have to make sure He doesn't lose the peace, said metaphorically, of course.

The *watchmen's* traditional reading of the seven heads of the red beast of Revelation 17 doesn't account for the time-specificness of the prophecy, dated to after the bowls containing God's wrath are poured out. Their traditional reading of the little horn as the Pope is flawed, since the little horn doesn't appear in text until the time of the end. The little horn has demonic breath; it is Satan.

Because the Roman Church claims to have changed the day of the weekly Sabbath and the dates of the annual High Sabbaths, and because it has taught the apostate doctrine of humans having immortal souls, the modern era of the Church of God has made a boogie man out of the Pope and all things stemming from Rome. The Church of God's anti-Rome bias has flavored our entire reading of prophecy for so long it becomes questionable if we can overcome our prejudice to see that we haven't applied the principle of letting the Bible interpret the Bible when it comes to Daniel's prophecies. Rather, Rawling's historical textbook determined how we would read these prophecies, not what Gabriel told Daniel. If we would have listened to Gabriel, we would have long ago realized that the focus of all endtime prophecies is the demon king of Greece, and the historical significance of Greek philosophy, secular and theological. As such, we have misread these prophecies, but then, these prophecies were sealed until the time of the end. They couldn't be understood by us or by anyone else, and their sealing had nothing to do with whether we were righteous, or seeking God's favor. Daniel was both; yet he didn't understand what he recorded. The lifting of the seals has to do with only one thing, where are we in the historical record of this era, which will end with the coming of the Messiah.

We, in the United States, try to spread democracy to all nations. Even the terms I use to break down figurative language are Greek terms. Our educational system is based on the Greek model. The visible Christian church adopted the Greek concept of an immortal soul, the Greek concepts of heaven and hell, the Greek day of worship. It is no wonder Evangelical missionaries have such a difficult time converting Jews—they are asking practicing Jews to give up their Hebraic beliefs and become Greeks.

The events following the terrorist attack of September 11th gives some understanding of what will happen in the future, when world politics will have been somewhat rearranged. In response to the attack of the king of the South, the king of the North realizes that despite the strength of his own forces with his iron teeth and bronze claws, he must win the battle for the mind of humanity. He must play his trump card; he must produce Christ, thereby causing worldwide Christian rival to break out. So he will become christ, and he will sound so pious, so righteous, so ridiculous to the Elect. But when Satan comes as the messiah, he will come claiming to be the King of the Jews; his purpose will be to snag the Elect any way he can deceive them. The remainder of humanity doesn't matter to him, for if he cannot deceive the Elect, he will go into the lake of fire. He will be destroyed utterly. So his only chance for a stalemate is to have actually defeated every saint before Christ returns as the all powerful Messiah. Martyring the saints will not win him that stalemate. He must deceive them.

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Section Two

a thing borrowed—

for early cells of persecution
nothing nearer than heaven
seemed beyond Roman reach
so a Greek concept borrowed
fit a need
 for escape

a need that continued
through plagues & trenches
& quiet desperation—
a need shackled to guilt
& made to speak
as a thundering tiger
brought forth threatening
noble & ignoble when tithes
dipped a little—

but a thing borrowed
must to be returned
& the concept of saints
in heaven has been held
far too long—

The Doctrine of Jesus

1.

Introduction

In 1969, I drove a then new Ford Maverick cross country, arriving in the Midwest while Americans walked on the moon. I went to visit my dad's relatives, one of whom was Dad's oldest brother, Floyd Kizer. When I met him, he was at work on a religious tract, and he barely interrupted his writing for long enough to join my aunt and myself for lunch. The urgency of what he had to say seemed to possess him. But he didn't share with me what he was writing; I assume he deduced my lack of interest. After lunch, I left him and Eastern Kentucky to visit Dad's youngest brother, Jerry Kizer, near Fort Wayne, Indiana. I asked Uncle Jerry a few questions about what Uncle Floyd wrote. He didn't know, and didn't seem interested. They were members of separate denominations, and their theological differences prevented spiritual discussion, the situation that exists today with my younger brothers.

Over the years, I have wondered what Uncle Floyd was writing that day, never imagining that I would someday, perhaps, address the same subjects. Floyd was somewhat estranged from the rest of the family, and he died before I again returned to middle America in 1991; so I have no idea what aspect of God's plan so interested him that he couldn't visit for more than half an hour.

Perhaps urgency is felt with age—Floyd was nearly 70 when I visited him—that urgency related directly to the dwindling of our allotted days. Perhaps our approaching death causes each of us to perceive the dawning of the last days, that period which will conclude with Christ's return as King of kings. Perhaps that dawning horizon becomes more vivid at the beginning of each new millennium, or maybe the end of the age appears closer during periods of cultural uncertainty, which has abounded since the terror attacks of September 11th. Whatever the reason, I feel an urgency to write.

I also feel a strong reluctance to venture among spiritual Nephilim, many with congregations larger than the entire Church of God, presently divided into more than two hundred divisions, many of which errantly preach that it only is the true Body of Christ. If God had to rely upon these splinter sects to build His house, His dwelling would fit inside a matchbox with room to spare. A work needs done. Christ has promised to raise up stones if we are unable to do that work. He might, right now, be selecting those stones, or moving existing stones out of the way so a work can be done. Hopefully, no stone will have to replace me, who, like David, has killed a bear.

It isn't with enthusiasm that I twirl words that will be slung at television empires, at household names, at men and women with a passion for saving souls; I would rather let others battle with the Nephilim. But Christ writing through John to the church at Laodicea said, "Therefore I counsel you to buy

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from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich; and white robes to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen; and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see" (Rev 3:18 — unless otherwise noted, all citations are from the *New Revised Standard Version*).

Within the Church of God, we have usually read the above passage to mean the saints at Laodicea will have to experience martyrdom, but that reading is an imposition of tradition onto the text. The passage literally says that the saints at Laodicea will have to purchase what they need during the day of the Lord, that prophetic period beginning when the Book of Revelation is understood. They could have freely received what they lack, but apparently they don't believe they need anything. Even half way through seven years of Tribulation, they don't see their lukewarm attitude towards Christ and His doctrine. They believe they understand the New Covenant, but their "understanding" will necessitate their having to buy the spiritual vision they want to cure their indifference.

Perhaps the wealth of the saints at Laodicea has caused them to ignore the doctrine Christ left His disciples nearly two millennia ago.

The saints at Laodicea became pragmatists. Doctrines are divisive. Like many Americans today, they, I suspect, wonder why we all can't get along; we all worship the same God. So compromise becomes a goal, not a fault. They cite Polycarp's taking the bread and wine symbols of Passover with Anicetus in a Sunday communion service, and applaud his allowance for differences, not understanding that Polycarp's trip to Rome might have lead directly to his martyrdom and certainly produced no desirable fruit. They argue that if a tenet of faith prevents saints from fellowshiping with other Christians, then that tenet must go. And they have nibbled away at the doctrines of the true vine until that vine has been pruned back to its roots. The fruit of that vine can now only be purchased in Laodicea.

We don't all worship the same God, that's the problem. Even after a third of humanity has been killed, the rest of humanity "did not repent of the works of their hands or give up worshipping demons and idols" (Rev 9:20). Humanity didn't suddenly start worshipping demons and idols in the Tribulation; they have been all along. And genuine saints have no fellowship with Christians who practice lawlessness, which comes through history not as lawbreaking but denying that the law of God exists. Christ said, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matt 10:34). So the answer to the question, *Can't we all just get along*, is no, we can't. Love isn't that easy. Love is doing what is right in every situation, which will make saints the enemy of all who worship demons and idols.

For Laodiceans of all nationalities, the doctrine of Jesus must be imported and sold, as if it were a winter lemon, setting the parents' teeth on edge. It isn't inclusive, nor easy. It might seem sweet in one's mouth, but it's bitter in the belly (Rev 10:9–10). Grace is an easy gospel to teach, but with grace comes the

law of God written on hearts and minds, that law governing how genuine saints live and think (Jer 31:33 & Heb 8:10, 10:16). When Paul compares the Sinai covenant, with its dead works, with the Moab covenant of faith (Rom 10:5–13) and proclaims that "if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (verse 9), Paul writes about the Israelite whose heart has been circumcised (Deu 30:6) and who obeys all of God's commandments and decrees written in Deuteronomy (verses 8 & 10). He isn't addressing Gentiles or Israelites who practice idolatry, but ones who have had their hearts circumcised and who desire to obey God. And obedience to God will "set a man against his father, / and a daughter against her mother, / and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law" (Matt 10:35). The sweetness of grace becomes bitter when the genuine disciple places obedience to God before family, and family gatherings at holidays where jolly fat men and egg-bearing rabbits seem like innocent fun.

Laodiceans of all nationalities have replaced their prophets with printing presses that run day and night as their booksellers censure all politically incorrect speech, thereby excluding the message Jesus brought that only individuals drawn by the Father can come to Him. Jesus' message wasn't democratic; He wasn't fair. So these Laodiceans turn to the writings of Paul, and through Paul, interpret the doctrine of Jesus.

Although books detailing the prayer of Jabez and the prayer of Jesus linger with Bibles and study helps on shelves heavy with pastoring aides and accounting software, the doctrine that Jesus taught, when filtered through historical exegesis, isn't found in any of the many volumes being hawked by Laodiceans. In their spiritual superstores, the children's section is behind; the Christian iconography, across the room. Everything is there, even Christmas ornaments and cards; everything except what Jesus taught. And at the cash register, I'm asked for my name and phone number when I purchase a replacement Bible. I'll be included on a list that might someday cause me problems; for the day will come when well-meaning Christians will kill members of the household of faith and think they are doing God a service.

The Jesus that didn't come to save all of humanity today isn't represented on the sagging shelves of books about Christian living and Christian finances and Christian love. Certainly objections will be made. Jesus is Love, and the shelves sag with love. Jesus is the Bread of Life, and the shelves sag under so many baskets of bread and fish. Jesus has a plan to prosper us, and the shelves can barely support the number of plans, each prospering the books' authors. Collectively, the number of books sold about Jesus staggers imaginations. But too few address what Jesus taught, or what he said. Rather, the books are about what Paul taught as if Paul were the soon coming Messiah.

So following in the footsteps of Paul, I have come to reveal this unknown God called Christ to a compartmentalized world, philosophically and culturally

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Greek. I come selling what was offered free a generation earlier, and remains free from the various administrations of the household of God. But advice with a pricetag is more highly valued than free advice by our materialistic culture, the reason consultants are routinely hired by businesses, large and small. Time becomes money: it is cheaper to buy a book than spend years listening to sermons.

Although my tone might be light, my subject isn't.

Christianity's claim of eternal life being a gift of God through Christ precludes all other religions from possessing validity. The documents that constitute the new covenant abolish the first covenant and physical Israelites' birthright claim to a relationship with God, a claim that comes from Abraham through circumcision. The better promises of the new covenant require all who will receive eternal life to repent, and acknowledge that Jesus the Christ came in the flesh and died for each individual's sins. Their hearts and minds become the tablets upon which the Father writes His law. They are no longer under the law, but have become the law. Since grace as the gift of God remains outside of them, saints are now under grace. Therefore, without being drawn by the Father and without accepting Jesus' sacrifice, a person has no life beyond death. All of humanity has sinned, the wages of which are death, the absence of the breath of life. Hope for any continuation of life lies only in accepting Jesus the Christ as our high priest, lies in a future resurrection, and in participation in the new covenant.

The claim of Christianity is exclusionary: the way to eternal life isn't a many spoked wheel, with some variant form of an Oversoul at its hub. A week ago, I was speaking with an observant Jew, who said she thought that Jesus today would be a reconstructionist rabbi; she then asked me why I thought He came. "He came to die," I said. My answer ended our conversation. Jesus didn't come to save the world, but to pay the penalty for sin so that humanity could be reconciled to the Father. He literally came to die. He came to defeat Satan on Satan's own turf, thereby qualifying to be King of kings, the title Satan presently holds as King of Babylon. He came to reveal the Father to those individuals whom the Father had drawn and continues to draw out of the world. He came as a prophet, not as the promised, all-conquering Messiah. He self-identifies Himself as a prophet, not as a carpenter. He did not come to offer universal salvation to everyone prior to His return as that all-powerful Messiah. The belief that salvation is open to everyone at this time is an apostate doctrine promulgated by Nicolaitans who reject Christ's rule in their lives; who reject the new covenant with its indemnifying doctrine of Jesus. These Nicolaitans might have once been of the household of faith, but they have invented light bulbs to illuminate the spiritual darkness in which they now dwell. They have become the salt and light to a deceived Western world. But a plate of salt isn't much of a main course if that were all a person has for supper. And their light comes with wires and switches, electrical generators and

government regulators. They are not a few grains sprinkled across society to add flavor to an otherwise bland world. They do not reflect the light of the Father, or of the glorified Christ. And they have the distasteful habit of shining flashlights in a person's face, temporarily blinding the person by their witnessing for a christ remade in their image.

The exclusionary nature of Christianity troubles our enlightened Western culture. In a way, the claim for Christianity is like the Marine Corps' recruiting slogan of *a few good men*. As I said and so there is no possible mistake, the claim of Christianity precludes the beliefs of Islam or Buddhism or Atheism from possessing validity. It is not even tolerant of claims for universal discipleship in this age. It is the claim of a subversive ideology predestined to replace every existing philosophical paradigm when the Messiah comes. As such, it devalues these paradigms that will be overturned. And it doesn't apologize for either its subversive nature or for its exclusivity. Unless the Father, whom Jesus came to reveal, draws a person to Himself, neither that person nor anyone else can come to the Father, can be franchised by the new covenant, can receive grace. The text can be read otherwise, but all such readings are by wannabe disciples and are not of the household of faith. All such readings are either of Nicolaitans, or of the crowds that followed Jesus, believing Him to be a great teacher but not understanding what He taught.

Dissent occurs within the household of faith, but not about the basic tenets of the new covenant, which together, form the doctrine of Jesus. Dissent is usually over how a prophesy should be understood, or over questions such as is smoking a lust of the flesh that should be denied. Some dissent is over who possesses the key of David, and whether all truth was restored to the Church of God a generation ago. Dissent stems from spiritual immaturity, and the remaining carnality of called-out disciples. And it isn't likely to entirely disappear until Christ returns. The exclusivity of Christianity tends to magnify character imperfections, unfortunately, making having love for one another a serious test of discipleship.

In graduate school, I remember reading complaints of 16th-Century English bishops about Dutch smugglers sneaking up, by moonlight, every slough and creek of the English coastline to off-load bags of books, each either seditious or a worthless romance. Perhaps that is what I have set out to do, sneak into markets where the doctrine of Jesus either isn't freely offered, or isn't valued highly enough to be received unless purchased. Whichever, what I offer I received by either the folly of preaching or by revelation while rereading the text. I feel some hesitation to set forth in print pearls that can be trampled by swine, the type of metaphorical language used by Jesus to both reveal and conceal meaning. This isn't part of the vocation I chose for myself. Instead, I feel as if I have been drafted to do a job—this job of smuggling the doctrine of Jesus into every slough and creek of mental coastlines, guarded by powerful shore batteries, their barrels aimed at sects and denominations of the Church

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of God, their gunsights focused on heresy as the King of Babylon defines it. If the moon remains hidden and if the tide holds for another hour, I can get in and out without the minions of the King knowing how much sedition I have spread in conveying the doctrine of Jesus to all who must purchase Truth.

*

Before I begin, let us examine the most poignant example of grace found in the Gospels: many of the earliest New Testament manuscripts do not include the story of the woman taken in adultery; it was intentionally left out, for it was either not understood, or understood but not an incident Nicolaitans wanted remembered.

Early one morning when Jesus came to the temple and began to teach, Pharisees brought a woman taken while committing adultery and made her stand before them and Jesus. They had, they believed, the perfect trap with which to hang Jesus with His own teachings. They asked Jesus what He had to say about the requirement of the Mosaic law that called for stoning her and the man with whom she was committing adultery. Guilt wasn't at issue. Grace was.

Jesus bent down and wrote on the ground with His finger. We don't know what he wrote. Perhaps a list of each of the Pharisees' sins. Perhaps the requirement that the man, too, must be brought to be stoned. Whatever He wrote caused the Pharisees to slink away so that only the woman remained standing before Him.

Augustine thought this story was dangerous; for once the Pharisees melted away, Jesus appears to be soft on sin. But Jesus would shortly pay with His own life the penalty for the woman's sin. He certainly didn't think sin lacked consequences. Rather, the penalty was as good as paid already if the woman would do what Jesus told her: "Go your way, and from now on do not sin again" (John 8:11). He didn't say His grace was sufficient. He didn't say once saved, always saved. He didn't say all she had to do was believe in her heart and confess with her mouth. He said, *Sin no more*. Sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4); so He told her, *From now on, keep the law*. Jesus was a legalist. Grace and legalism go hand in hand.

It isn't to Paul where one goes to find the doctrine of Jesus, but to Christ Himself. If Pauline theology seems to conflict with Jesus' own words, then Paul needs to be reread.

2.

The Doctrine

The doctrine of Jesus is the doctrine which Jesus taught. It isn't a doctrine about Jesus; it isn't the doctrine of Paul, or John, or Peter, or Polycarp. It is what Jesus said as the Logos, as a man, and as the glorified Son. It is theologically simple, and hardly worthy of being swollen into a book. Yet, it is such an alien concept that unless the Father draws a person to Himself, it

cannot be understood, let alone accepted. It defies Christian orthodoxy and the long tradition of biblical understanding derived from historical exegesis.

When Jesus began His ministry at age thirty, He identifies Himself as a prophet without honor in His hometown. But the Magi came bearing gifts to the child who was "born king of the Jews" (Matt 2:2). When Pontius Pilate asked if He, Jesus, was "the King of Jews" (Matt 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3; John 18:33), Jesus said, "You say so" (Matt 27:11 *et al*), and "For this I was born, and for this I came into the world" (John 18:37). But during His years on earth, Jesus didn't receive the crown for which He was born and for which He qualified. Rather, He exercised the office of a prophet, not the office of the mighty Messiah who would smite the world-ruling king of Greece upon His coming. To Pharisees, Jesus was a false messiah because He didn't come with an all-conquering spiritual army. They expected the true Messiah to behave how their perception of a king would. They weren't looking for another prophet.

Crowds followed Jesus, believing Him to, indeed, be a prophet. But His teachings were concealed within parables so these same crowds wouldn't understand what He said (Matt 13:11–15). He didn't come to save them or the world in their lifetimes. Instead, He came to reveal the previously unknown Father to His disciples; to teach His disciples how to read text; and to die, thereby providing the template for the future resurrection of humans to eternal life as members of the family of God. He came to complete the creation He spoke into existence as the Logos, and to pay the penalty for every sin committed by the individuals the Father would draw out of the world.

Jesus failed to meet the expectations of the Pharisees, or of the crowds that followed Him, or even of His disciples (they wouldn't have returned to fishing if he had), but not of the Father, who was well pleased with Him. Today, Jesus fails to meet the expectations of the visible Christian Church that worships diversity and inclusiveness, the acceptance of human shortcomings and heaven littered with souls having nothing to do; so this Church and her many daughters feign near-sightedness, and read primarily the writings of Paul, seeing only those biblical passages that seem to support the democratization of salvation. She and her daughters determined long ago which doctrines and which disciples they would accept as genuine. They rejected all that conflicted with their perception of faith and grace, thereby determining for themselves who Jesus was and which messages Jesus would be allowed to teach to their congregations. They defined their Creator by their standards of fairness, assigning to Him doctrines of universal salvation upon demand, prosperity upon demand, healing upon demand, and hell for everyone who doesn't accept their Jesus.

An example of Jesus having a doctrine alien to the visible Christian Church is found in what Jesus said to the rich young ruler: "A certain ruler asked him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus said to him, 'Why

do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments"" (Luke 18:18–20). The young ruler asked what he must do *to inherit eternal life*. Apparently he didn't believe he had inherited an immortal soul, and Jesus doesn't "correct" his error. Despite all of the visible Church's wringing of the Lazarus and Dives story, Jesus doesn't teach that a person has an immortal soul. Rather, the Logos inspired Solomon to write:

I said in my heart with regard to human beings that God is testing them to show that they are but animals. For the fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and humans have no advantage over animals; for all is vanity. All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again (Eccl 3:18–20).

When Elohim created humanity, Elohim breathed into Adam "the breath of life; and the man became a living being" (Gen 2:7). No other life was given to Adam. Therefore, Adam was never able to pass on any additional life but that which is from breath. By breathing, we introduce oxygen into our lungs which is then carried by the blood throughout our bodies where it is needed for cellular combustion of sugars, the means by which our life is sustained. We are each a collection of miniature fuel chambers where combustion does work. As such, we are similar though technically more advanced to the types of engines we build to do work for us. And as with an engine with its breather switch flipped shut, when our supply of oxygen is cut off combustion ceases. We become corpses that will decompose into dust as soon as bacteria breakdown all of the preservatives we have either consumed, or we have had pumped through our veins after death.

I know the passages that say we are *pneuma* and *soma*, or in the case of 1 Thessalonians 5:23, that we are *psuche*, *pneuma*, and *soma*. *Pneuma* is to breathe deeply, and has been figuratively used as a linguistic icon corresponding to the English icon "life." *Soma* corresponds to the English icons "body" or "flesh." So passages that describe humanity as *pneuma* and *soma* can be properly rendered in English as breath and body, or life and body. The passage in Thessalonians adds *psuche* which conveys the sense of more shallow breathing than *pneuma*. The Greek icons are used by Paul metaphorically, and can best be understood in English in their imaginative sense: we regularly use the expression that a person is flesh and blood. Noah was told, "Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood" (Gen 9:4); so "life" or *pneuma* can be, by metonymy, identified by the linguistic icon "blood." *Psuche*, now, represents itself as breath. Thus, a person is, reversing the word order, flesh and blood and breath—*soma* and *pneuma* and *psuche*—exactly how Solomon described humanity. The translation of "spirit," "soul" and "body" for the Greek icons comes from a long tradition of assigning the linguistic objects of these English icons to the Greek icons. It stems from the time-honored

practice of elevating tradition over rereading the text. And the tradition should be bludgeoned from existence. It has done more than its share of damage to novices seeking the doctrine of Jesus when the biblical narrative only has Paul wishing the saints good health.

The concept of an immortal soul was introduced into the biblical narrative by the serpent in the Garden of Eden: "But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil'" (Gen 3:4–5). Eve believed the serpent. Adam went along with Eve, knowing, though, that the Logos, the spokesperson for Elohim, had said, "'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die'" (Gen 2:16–17). So the contrasting doctrines were set forth in Eden: humanity will either die if it eats of the Tree, or humanity won't die but will become like God, the former the doctrine of the Logos who would be born as Jesus, the later the doctrine of the serpent or Satan. Those are the two positions: either we die or we don't. Physical evidence—all that we have to rely upon—indicates that Adam died, that he doesn't continue to live in Iraq separated from God, that death isn't separation from God, but rather, the cessation of breath and the return to dust. Greeks who crept into the household of faith contended that death was, indeed, merely separation from God. Their position was and remains contradictory to what the Logos inspired in the Writings and Prophets of the Old Covenant. It is contrary to the doctrine of Jesus, who said to both the Pharisees and to His disciples, "'You will search for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come'" (John 7:34 & 13:33). The textual assumption is that neither the Pharisees nor His disciples would ever be able to go to where Jesus was going. Jesus, when resurrected to His glorified state, would return to heaven from where He came as the Logos. Humanity cannot go to heaven, according to Jesus.

I have heard numerous preachers "prove" saints are heavenbound with their hasty readings of John 14:2–7. Jesus told His disciples, "'In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also'" (verses 2–4). Before problems of translation are addressed, the question must be addressed: where will Christ be when He comes again? The answer is self-evident. He will be here on earth. Does any passage exist that suggests Christ returns to heaven after His Second Coming? No. The teaching of a near-miss rapture that drags saints off to heaven lacks textual support. Rather, Christ returns as King of kings, establishes His millennium reign, after which Satan will be loosed for a brief season; then the White Throne judgment occurs, followed by the lake of fire, and the arrival of the new heavens and new earth, with new Jerusalem here. Nowhere in the biblical narrative does Christ

return to heaven once He resurrects the saints. So the only place where the disciples can be if they are with Christ is here on earth. Besides, Christ has already said that they cannot go to heaven.

Concerning translation, Jesus was going to prepare a *topos* for the disciples, for me, a Greek word that has the mostly identical linguistic object of the English icon, "spot." Jesus was going to prepare a *spot* for me. That can mean a small, geographical location, but usually the linguistic icon is used figuratively to mean a job, such as a foreman telling a job-seeker, *I'll see if I can find a spot for you on the crew.* Thus, when I now return to the Greek word *mone* which King James translators rendered as "mansions" and the NRSV translators as "dwelling places," for me the best understanding is a *staying* as in a relationship or in a legal expectancy, thereby rendering the passage as Christ saying that in His Father's house are *many permanent relationships*, that He, Christ, *was going to prepare a permanent relationship with the Father for each saint.*

(I have heard analogies of the passage in John 14 in which the mansions were compared to rooms added to a Judean patriarch's house when sons brought home their brides. These analogies are alternative readings of the text that aren't excluded linguistically. However, I don't believe they are the best reading. Regardless, though, no one in either reading goes to heaven.)

Having Jesus as the Christ going ahead of the saints to prepare permanent relationships with the Father makes sense, since it was the Father who made the first overture in drawing us to Him. Christ said He came to reveal the Father to the disciples: Jesus told Philip, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father?'" (John 14:9). In His intercessory prayer, Christ said, "I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me. . . . Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you . . . I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:6, 25–26). So Christ came to make the Father known to the disciples.

Neither the Pharisees nor the crowds that followed Jesus knew of the Father even though when the Elohim created humanity, Elohim said, "Let us make humankind in our image" (Gen 1:20 —the pronoun *us* is properly translated). The Logos that spoke these words was made flesh in perhaps the greatest technological marvel yet accomplished. The Logos, existing outside Its creation, entered Its creation. We have nothing analogous although movies in which a character enters computer circuitry or a software program the character has written might be as close as we can come to understanding what the Logos did to be born as Jesus the Christ.

For converts to Christianity, whether Pharisees or Sadducees or Greek philosophers, a new difficulty arose: how could they retain Judaism's monotheism when confronted by Jesus' introduction of the Father to His disciples. After all, *one* is a single integer that when multiplied by itself yields

itself; one is never plural, at least not for us since we adopted Greek mathematics. The nature of our language promotes singleness for most every icon; the plural form is created through a modification of the icon (e.g., in English the addition of a suffix). The linguistic object of most nouns is singular without the modification. A few exceptions exist: family, congregation, etc. But notice how NRSV translators have rendered Jesus' use of the single integer:

I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one. I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me (John 17:20–23).

If a person were to try to render this passage pictorially, how would the person handle the disciples as one, with Christ in them and the Father in Christ. The person would have to draw a bull's-eye target, not a triangle, if the disciples lose individual identity. If identity isn't lost, then the picture would look like a rendering of a pomegranate, with many Christs and many Fathers. Now add the Holy *Pneuma* or Breath to the picture after Christ sends the Advocate (Comforter, KJV) to each individual disciple. No pictorial rendering of Jesus' prayer allows any triune construction. Rather, the integer *one* assume pomegranate qualities; for Jesus' prayer asks that the disciples and all those who will be discipled afterwards be included in the same Father-Son relationship that Jesus and the Father have; asks that they become one with Him and the Father. The Trinity derived from *Logos Christology* is, of course, an apostate doctrine, its triune nature coming from the conjoined bodies of Astarte and Baal. In Canaanite and Israelite iconography, the circle, crescent and triangle appear together and were, respectively, the sun as Baal, the moon as Astarte, and their conjoined bodies as the triangle.

In Jesus' figurative use of language, *one* conveys unity, not singleness. Just as there are many fruit cells within each pomegranate, with each appearing similar and with all being part of a single ovary, the same relationship applies to the Father, Son and future glorified disciples, all part of Elohim. But the analogy breaks down if a person doesn't mix metaphors and recognize that the Father will always be the head of the family of God, and there can only be one first-born Son. Glorified disciples will be one with Christ and the Father as younger siblings within the family. For additional Scriptural support of this reading, consider,

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to

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fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is the very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ (Rom 8:14–17).

and

The first man [Adam] was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man [Christ] is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven.

Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven (1 Corth 15:47–49).

Paul's language is straightforward: we will be children of the Father as Christ is the firstborn Son of the Father. We will be resurrected in the image of Christ, in that we will be like Him in His glorified state. There will be no qualitative difference between glorified saints and Christ. All will be heirs of the Father and joint heirs with Christ. Glorified saints will be members of Elohim, the singular linguistic icon for the godhead, an icon that is plural in sense and structure in the way a pomegranate has many fruit sacs inside its singleness. We will be—I don't want to say this too loudly for fear of being overheard—God; we will be parts of Elohim, a statement of fact that sends cringes along the spines of the Evangelical Church. But such is the doctrine of Jesus, who came to reveal the Father to the disciples, not to all of humanity at this time.

One more time so there can be no mistake:

It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneers of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters (Heb 2:10–11).

Jesus as the Christ is the One who sanctifies; so saints and Christ all have one Father. The same relationship will exist between glorified saints and the Father as now exists between Christ and the Father. And if Christ is not ashamed to call saints brothers and sisters, then why should I be ashamed of identifying Christ as my older brother? I am not. Despite the wide spread apostate doctrine of a closed, triune godhead, a portion of the gospel message Jesus brought to His disciples is that humanity's destiny will be, when glorified, adoption into the godhead, a family structure of potentially fifty and more billion.

Pharisees and Sadducees were monotheistic because they knew only the Logos. They had never heard of the Father. It was Jesus' task as a prophet to reveal the Father to the predestined few whom the Father would draw to Himself: the Father is and has been hiring to fill certain positions within Christ's administration when He, Christ, returns as King of kings. Eventually, everyone will have his or her chance to have a relationship and a position with the Father, but that day is during the White Throne Judgement, when the Book of Life is opened for the first time to all humanity. This will definitely not be a second chance at salvation since eternal life is now only offered to those who have been drawn or selected by the Father. Christ told His disciples that "You did not choose me but I chose you" (John 15:16); yet in Christ's last intercessory prayer, He said that He had made known the Father's name to those whom the Father gave Him (John 17:6). Apparently the drawing of disciples is by the Father, and their nurturing is by Christ.

Monotheism, like the Sabbath after the return of a few Jews from Babylon, was made into an idolatrous doctrine by intelligent but carnal men. As the Sabbath needs no *halakhab* hedge to protect it from violation, monotheism needs no contorted logic to understand *one* as unity, or "to unify." All a person needs to do is buy a pomegranate the next time grocery shopping. One piece of fruit, many fruit sacs. One Kizer family, many Kizer siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, first, second, third, and away we go, back to when a forebearer was titled Caesar. One Elohim, one Father, many siblings with Christ the first born. There is no mystery here. The text is understandable to all who have been drawn by the Father.

It must be understood that the doctrine of Jesus does not contain an open altar call at this time: Christ didn't come to save the world. He came to pay the penalty for humanity's sins, and He came to reveal the Father to the *ekklesia*, or called-out disciples. Humanity, through Adam in Eden, separated itself from Elohim, which then consisted of, as far as revealed, the Logos and the Father. Sin, which is lawlessness (1 John 3:4), stood between humanity and the Father—and there was nothing humanity could do to reconcile itself to the Father once separated. In fairness to angels, the death of the sinner was required. The Father couldn't have one standard for angels and another for humanity. Satan's complaint against Elohim that resonated with the demons was that the godhead wasn't fair. Although extra-textual evidence can confirm that this is Satan's principle strategy for fostering rebellion, consider what Satan says of Job: "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not put a fence around him and his house and all that he has, on every side?" (Job 1:9). Satan's position seems to be that God has played favorites with Job, dealing with Job in a manner different from everyone else, thus becoming a respecter of persons.

The issue of fairness plays a large part in the implied purpose for the creation of humanity, the earth, and perhaps all space. From all textual

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evidence, angels were created prior to the physical universe (Job 38:4–7). Lucifer, who became Satan, was created as "the signet of perfection,/ full of wisdom and perfect in beauty" (Eke 28:12). He was one of three archangels. He was created perfect, "blameless" (verse 15), but eventually, "iniquity was found in" him. Elohim had created the most perfect being possible, and had given that living entity free moral agency. For whatever reason (vanity), that archangel became filled with violence, convinced a third of all angels that God was unfair, and rebelled against Elohim. A war was fought, and Satan was cast from heaven.

After the war in which Satan was cast down, what occurred within the spiritual realm becomes speculative, but enough textual implication remains that certain conclusions are probable. We know the earth was either created, or its surface was renewed in six days. Two prevailing readings of text exist: the first is the gap theory, which holds that the earth was created perfect and after a period of time became without form and void, or in the vernacular, destroyed. The gap occurs between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, and this gap allows for an old earth, with a long geological history. This theory suggests that Satan became envious of God's plan to reproduce Himself through humanity—that plan conceived before the foundations of the earth were laid—and that Satan rebelled because, according to this plan, Satan would eventually become subject to these inferior humans; that Satan felt God was unfair in not giving angels, particularly himself, the chance to become members of the godhead. This gap theory was taught by Herbert Armstrong, and continues to be taught by most of the derivative groups originating from the Worldwide Church of God before Nicolaitans gained control of the organization following Mr. Armstrong's death. The gap theory remains as the most viable reading of text if the earth is truly three or four billion years old.

If literal death enters the world by sin (the claim of biblical text), then no death can occur prior to the tree-of-knowledge incident where Eve succumbs to the serpent's lie. This literal reading precludes the earth from being of great age, and strongly suggests that the earth is six thousand plus a few years old. In addition, the Logos speaking from Sinai seemed to confirm a young heaven and earth: "'For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day'" (Exod 20:11). So in comparison to the gap theory, a stronger case can be made from biblical text for a young earth than for an old earth, especially in light of evolving data about the age of strata and fossils, and the possibility of the earth having expanded in size during the days of Peleg, when the earth was divided (Gen 10:25). Biblical text has usually been read to say that the divisions of Peleg's life were of the tribes of the earth, but if the text says what it seems to, then Pangea, the single large continental land mass, was broken up at this time, which is within the historical record. The divisions weren't of peoples, but of continents. The indications are that the earth increased in size ten to twelve percent without increasing in mass. A

warming of the earth's core would swell the planet's diameter, which in turn would cause plate movement, thereby cracking the surface as happens with rising bread dough when the dough has dried on its surface. The increased diameter of the earth would lower atmospheric pressure in the same manner as climbing tall mountains does, or as happens when flying.

If the earth has increased in diameter, physical evidence should exist to demonstrate that increase. I believe it does: human fetuses are oxygen deprived in their third trimester, and actually suffer brain damage because of this depravation. At present atmospheric pressures, not enough oxygen crosses the placenta to supply the fetuses' needs. However, at double atmospheric pressures the problem doesn't occur. Thus, we were either created or evolved (which I don't believe) at a time when atmospheric pressure was higher. Humanity is intricately enough designed that our creator wouldn't make such a mistake. And the difference in atmospheric pressure might account for our lower life expectancy post Flood. On the cell level, our bodies would oxidize carbohydrates differently with increased atmospheric pressure. Toxins would probably have no free electrons for bonding, and as such would more easily pass from our bodies. Sound would become more of a force. We would, literally, live in a different world.

We see a little of the effects of atmospheric pressure in Bolivia today, where pregnant women descend to lower elevations to bear children, then take two years following childbirth to return to the altitude at which the family lives, with the residents necessarily becoming more barrel-chested to live at the higher elevations than are flat-landers. So the thinner air of higher elevations limits human occupation, and should effect all animal species in a similar manner, tending to limit the size of the surviving species. The larger the species, the more difficult it is to develop the increased lung capacity necessary to ensure survival. Thus, the largest members of the buffalo, elk, tiger species would have the most difficult time making the transition if the earth expanded in diameter. The super-size dinosaurs wouldn't be able to. What would be left are either species that initially had overly large lungs, or the smallest members of species. Prey species that needed the ability to outrun predators should, theoretically, have proportionally larger lungs than predator species, and should have better survived the expansion; so there should be a greater number of prey species than predator today than evidenced in the fossil record. And this seems to be the case.

At double atmospheric pressures, coal forms in a few hours. Ferric-chloride compounds become possible, making forging a hammer head such as the one found near London, Texas by Max Han practical (the head is covered by FeO, which doesn't often form in today's atmosphere—the hammer is probably a pre-Flood artifact). Sound would carry indescribably better: I was living in Fairbanks, Alaska, during the cold snap of 1989. For five weeks our daytime high temperatures didn't reach -50°F. Atmospheric pressure

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was 31.85 inches of mercury. The airport was seven miles away. Usually I couldn't hear any of the air traffic, but during that cold snap, planes sounded as if they were landing on my roof. Thus, with double atmospheric pressure we could hear the sounds of outer space, the groaning that now can only be heard by the "big ear" at the Arecibo Observatory. Plant life would be stimulated both by the denser atmosphere and by the sound. The whole earth would be a virtual jungle, thereby requiring large herbivores such as the dinosaurs to keep the growth in check. And if that growth were quickly covered by water and mud, it would become the type of coal deposits we mine.

Now comes the greatest speculation: God knows when the feather of a sparrow falls. Christ, knowing what would happen to the city, wept for Jerusalem. God isn't willing that any of humanity perish, but that all come to repentance. So Elohim had to grieve when a third of the angels joined Satan in rebellion. But two-thirds didn't join Satan. They could have. Each angel in that two-thirds has free will. (Iniquity couldn't have been found in Satan if he didn't have free will. Without free will, Elohim would have had to have created that iniquity, which would have made Elohim the author of evil, and that is emphatically not the case. So with Satan having free will, the implication is that each angel has the ability to choose right or wrong.)

Apparently when an angel chooses good or evil that choice becomes permanent. Otherwise, repentance for the demons would be possible, and the biblical narrative nowhere even hints at such a possibility. But an angel could fight against Satan's rebellion, could do its job year by year, and could never have to choose good or evil. The opportunity to make such a choice just wouldn't occur. Thus, in all likelihood the majority of the angels that didn't rebel haven't yet made a choice one way or the other. They are obedient because they were created to be so. They are loyal because when have they had the chance to be disloyal except during Satan's rebellion. They weren't under Satan's broadcast of rebellion, so they haven't experienced what humanity has or what the angels under Satan experienced. And I don't believe Satan thinks his rebellion is over.

The question of whether the two-thirds of angels "choose" to follow God and not rebel might be illustrated by the example of our breathing—taking our next breath. We breathe without thinking about what we do unless we have emphysema, where breathing becomes a conscious effort. Satan is the prince of the air, and as such, we live under Satan's broadcast of rebellion. For us, doing what is right becomes a decision just as breathing is for a person with emphysema. But the two-thirds of the angels that didn't rebel aren't under Satan's broadcast. Doing the jobs for which they were created is as decisionless as is breathing for a person with healthy lungs. They probably haven't made a decision about choosing between God's way or Satan's, for they can do their jobs without the necessity of making a choice, unlike all of humanity.

Elohim's creation of the earth and of humanity appears to have a twofold objective. The first is what has been taught by the Church of God from the beginning: Elohim is reproducing Themselves. If a spirit being created perfect in all aspects cannot be counted on to remain perfect, then only living entities like Themselves will always choose righteousness. In order to create entities like Themselves, the individuals must have the opportunity to choose righteousness thousands and ten of thousands of times. The individuals must choose righteousness so often that their choice of righteousness becomes their personality, becomes who they are. They must choose righteousness until no conscious choice is made. Then the Father can trust each individual not to become another Satan.

In order for many choices of righteousness to be made, Elohim needed a living entity that was mutable. In addition, Elohim wanted to avoid the difficulty that fallen angels pose: what is Elohim to do with them now that they have chosen to rebel? They will be temporarily cast into outer darkness, but that can't be a very satisfying solution. These demons will be miserable forever even though they will be where they can do no harm.

Elohim gave angels life, and our assumption within the Church of God has been that They wouldn't take life from them. But language exists to call that assumption into question. The King of Tyre in the lament Ezekiel records (chapter 28) is usually recognized as Satan. About this King of Tyre, God says, "So I brought out fire from within you; / it consumed you, / and I turned you to ashes on the earth / in sight of all who saw you. / All who know you among the peoples / are appalled at you; / you have come to a dreadful end / and shall be no more forever" (28:18–19). Satan is thrown into the lake of fire at the end of Christ's Millennium reign. Apparently, he is burned up completely.

As an aside, under the Platonic paradigm of an ever burning hell, who will be in charge if Satan is bound in the bottomless pit with a great chain for a thousand years (Rev 20:1–3), then destroyed by fire? There is a problem here that the Platonists need to resolve before they continue teaching their apostate doctrine.

Humanity is the perfect solution for both the problem of what to do with rebels and for the creation of character that will always choose to do that which is right. By his own admission, Paul didn't understand why there was one law in his flesh and another in his mind (Rom 7:7–25). The reason is simple: humanity needs the opportunity to choose righteousness, or to do that which is right, the making of that choice to occur over and over again until it has sculpted our character into choosing righteousness without conscious thought. With our flesh as our character's foil, we will not be able to live with our choice to do what is right for long; we will continually have to remake the decision to do what is right. Whereas an angel might go millennia without having to make the decision to do right, we go microseconds, or minutes, seldom hours. Grace remains outside of us to cover all of those times we fail to

live up to our decision to do right. The production of our decisions to do right (our good works) are of no value to God, and aren't really all that good, but our decision making process to always do that which is right is what God could not create directly. It is what He could not create in Lucifer. So He needs our participation in His plan to, through indirection, create character like His. To the creation of this decision making process (i.e., individual character) He will add a glorified body, and He will adopt us into His family, granting to us all the rights and privileges of being God. He can trust us to always do what is right in every situation. If He can't trust us, if there is any doubt, we won't be in the kingdom of God in any capacity.

We have no inherent life other than our breath. If we prove generally disagreeable, we will enter the lake of fire after a physical resurrection. We will be reduced to ashes and forgotten. We won't suffer forever. We won't be seared first on our left sides, then on our right, ever roasting but never quite cooking enough to be served to demons in an everburning hellfire.

As drawn out disciples, we receive the earnest (as in earnest money) of eternal life, thereby creating within us a new creature, or a new man. This new creation in us wars against our flesh. We know to do right, but we fail to do so. We must again choose to do right, and again, we fail. Again we choose. And so goes our lives. The number of times we choose righteousness and fail to perform to the standard that is Christ can be astronomical. But as long as we keep making the choice of righteousness, the earnest of eternal life that is in us keeps developing—and we begin doing better with our choices. At some point, that earnest of eternal life has developed enough that it can be born from above, a determination made by the Father. Our physical bodies are, now, no longer needed. We can await our change in the grave.

The second objective of creating humanity seems to be the establishment of a demonstration to prove Satan's ways will ultimately produce death, a demonstration that gives the two-thirds of the angels who didn't rebel the grounds to make an informed decision about which way they want to live, about whom do they want to believe. As such, we are laboratory mice, confined to this round cage to act out any number of schemes. For our participation in this demonstration, we will receive life.

The idea of humanity being part of a demonstration changes our perception of Satan and his intentions. He is the Adversary, the archenemy of all called-out disciples, who are not only spies within the enemy camp but are part of a rebel organization that will supplant him as ruler of this world at Christ's return. He has no choice about destroying us if he can, if the Father allows. Real war is being waged, even though the winner has already been determined. Satan is like a chess opponent who is trying every tactic possible to avert the foreseen checkmate. As long as any hope exists of him winning or salvaging a draw, he will not concede—and Satan could win a draw if he can

demonstrate that one of his schemes will work, or if he can demonstrate that humanity isn't to be trusted with sonship.

The vast majority of humanity is under Satan's rule. He can run any scenario that he thinks will work. Reality for humans relates directly to their first language, even to the number of colors and to which colors they see. I do not experience a phenomenon the same as an Arabic speaker does. In other words, the two of us could observe or experience the same event; yet our observations or experiences will be different, that difference corresponding to how we use language. This is difficult to appreciate when first encountering the concept, but the evidence for the concept's validity is overwhelming. Therefore, Satan can run simultaneous experiments, testing where democratization or socialization will produce the most harmony. He can show how Capitalism is so wonderful, and why Communism will also work. He will head a one-world rule that enforces peace upon everyone. But each of his ideas or demonstrations will end in failure, partly because he sowed rebellion and is reaping rebellion from the demons under him. He has not been able to control the fighting between the demon known as the king of the North, and the demon known as the king of the South. He hasn't been able to maintain control of the demon over China, or over India. Each of those demons were probably powerful lieutenants under him in his war against Elohim, and each of them probably lost respect for him when they were cast down. So each of them is trying to run his own projects, thereby making Satan's task of ruling all the more difficult. Eventually he will realize that his time is up, that none of his demonstrations are going to work, and he will seek to devour all of the saints as he, in one last attempt to prevail, mimics Christ's return and the establishment of Christ's millennium reign. He has planned a nearly perfect endtime trap to prove to Elohim how even the disciples Christ has tutored can be deceived. And if those disciples can be deceived, then humanity isn't to be trusted with sonship, leaving open the possibility of him and the demons being restored to Elohim.

I think Satan actually wants one of his schemes to work, thus proving to the two-thirds of the angels who haven't chosen which way they will go that he has the right message for the right time. But there is only one way that will work, the way of love, the way of Elohim. And that is the only way, until the antiChrist appears, Satan won't try. Then as that antitype antiChrist—the second beast of Revelation 13—Satan will wave the Cross of Calvary as his mark, requiring all to bear this mark in order to buy and sell. He will make himself appear as the messiah; he will preach love, and will murder the saints he can locate. He will be utterly ruthless in his pursuit of the saints who are not part of the 144,000 sealed in the place Christ has prepared for them. He will vent his anger on all of humanity, but especially on the saints.

After Satan has his six thousand years to demonstrate that none of his schemes will work, Christ will set up His rule for a thousand years. It will work.

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And after His thousand year reign, the angels and all of humanity can compare God's way with Satan's. I suspect few will choose Satan's way. Thus, except to the drawn disciples, salvation and a relationship with God is not now being offered to humanity. The majority of humanity presently has its choice of cheeses; nothing more is being offered.

The concept of a young earth now makes additional sense: if one purpose for the creation of humanity is to demonstrate that all of Satan's ways produce misery, bitter herbs and death, then the means for demonstrating his schemes needed to be put together rather quickly. This is actually what we see in the still expanding universe. We don't see an old earth. Geologic processes happen much faster than advertised. And the dating of strata, and of fossils has become suspect.

The problem with the gap theory seems to be a willingness of saints to believe scientists over God; an underlying flaw in the gap theory is how small it makes God. The theory limits our thinking of how God could accomplish continental drift. The Flood becomes a less consequential event. Dinosaurs lived millions of years ago instead of with Job, as is recorded in chapters 40 and 41. It really is a poor theory; for it deceives saints into squeezing God into a carnally-dated geological record. It eliminates the need to reexamine and reinterpret data by the Church of God; it has left that work to the Evangelical community.

From my look at the archeological and geological record, I find a God large enough to have created the universe suddenly, and to have utterly destroyed a culture with the Flood. It appears that God didn't want any of the preFlood culture coming forward through time except the little He relates about Noah. Jonathan Edwards' "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" is bad theology, but his sizing of God might be better than ours in the now 21st-Century. If God can break loose earth's fountains of the deep, cover its surface with water, then cause that water to go somewhere, all because He is angry about the violence that then filled the earth, He can certainly cause the earth's diameter to swell, thereby breaking the landmass (Pangea) into continents (drift might be the inevitable result of the greater rotational torque from a larger diameter).

Because the Church of God has, for the past seventy years or so, subscribed to the gap theory, the Church has de-emphasized secular scientific education, stressing instead the need for in-house taught administrative skills. That emphasis on pastoring skills within its educational facilities has left it behind the curve instead of on the leading edge; has left it vulnerable to the Nicolaitanism that closed its educational facilities.

For the past seventy years, the Church of God has taught that Satan was put in charge of the earth to dress and groom it, to, as the analogy went, put the frosting on the cake. This is certainly a valid extra-textual reading of the biblical narrative, if the gap theory were true. But it isn't. As a result of this

extra-textual reading, the Church of God became concerned about outward appearances, about representing God in everything, about both the figurative inside and outside of the cup. Nothing is wrong with the latter, but humanity tends to drift. Often, from the perspective of a lay member it seemed more emphasis was placed on the outside of the cup than on the inside; thus, the Church became somewhat Pharisaical. The resulting backlash was a second-generation that shuns legalism and embraces Nicolaitanism. This generation of leaders wrestled control of the most visible administration of the Church of God away the ministry best trained to polish the outsides of cups (this is not to say this ministry wasn't concerned about insides; they were and they remain so). The resulting loss of control of the physical assets of the organization was, probably, inevitable. Too much emphasis was placed on "things," on being Pharisaical. Those saints who "went about in the skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented . . . [who] wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground" (Heb 11:37–38) and "of whom the world was not worthy" probably would not have been warmly received in the household of faith, but would have been told to get a haircut and buy a suit before they could attend Sabbath services. I do not jest. So a person could have expected the Church to be tried on its Pharisaical attitude that stemmed directly from its extra-textual reading of what the angels were doing in the gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. It's sad that the Church of God had to experience the closing of its campuses, but perhaps those campuses had become more problematic than beneficial even though the Church of God needs to retain the ability to educate itself.

We don't know what the angels were doing prior to Satan's rebellion; we don't need to know. To use the gap theory to make blanket, declarative statements about what angels were doing prior to Eden is presumptive.

*

Jesus taught in parables so the crowds that followed Him wouldn't understand:

Then the disciples came and asked [Jesus], "Why do you speak to [the great crowd following Jesus] in parables?" He answered, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. The reason I speak to them in parables is that 'seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.' . . . 'so they might not look with their eyes,/ and listen with their ears,/ and understand with their heart and turn—/ and I would heal them' (Matt 13:10–13, 15).

Those crowds that followed Christ and their descendants did not then, and do not now want to accept the fact that they cannot understand Jesus' gospel message. Some few of them, like the Canaanite women with a demon possessed daughter, will take the kingdom by force. But the majority of them already believe, as born again Christians, that they possess the kingdom; thus, they will not strive to obtain it. Sadly, some drawn disciples will also not strive for it. Unlike the person who has not been drawn, the person who has been called but who neglects his or her calling gambles with his or her salvation, with the lake of fire awaiting the roll of the die.

The Father draws whomever He pleases from Satan's administration here on the earth; He literally drafts the person. No one in the Church of God is a volunteer. Some might have volunteered for the draft, but until that draft notice was delivered, the person was still part of Satan's realm.

None of us know whom the Father will draft; so as members of the household of faith, we have the obligation to disciple all who want disciplined, knowing that some will not be genuine (1 Corth 11:19). We can neither put someone into the Church of God, nor keep someone out. However, we can offend little ones, which is not something Christ takes lightly (unless millstones start being made from pumice). Therein lies a difficulty for every member of the household: how much trading and increase of the talent Jesus left with each of us is required? Textual implication suggests there is no upper limit; yet for most of my years in the Church of God, the Church has emphasized speaking with only one mouthpiece, that of the office of the apostle. Church organization and administration was from the top down, with Christ as the head of the Church. That teaching remains a sticking point with many members even though it is apparent that false disciples have seized control of administrative headquarters. As in the case John mentions in his third epistle where Diotrephes was expelling saints, these false disciples have disfellowshipped all ministers who won't teach their Nicolaitan doctrines. So how much am I required to do to be a profitable servant of Christ? The good news of the soon-coming kingdom of God that went out powerfully worldwide a generation ago is now squeaked out on a few satellite television channels, with a few slick magazines gaining subscribers, the publishers of the magazines convinced the other organizations are apostate. Truthfully, the situation within the household of faith is barely conducive to discipling those drawn by the Father, which might account for few being drawn at this time. Yet before the end of the age, there will be 144,000 who follow the Lamb of God wherever He goes; plus, there will be an additional remnant of the Church of God who will survive the Tribulation outside the place prepared by Christ, that place Mt. Zion, the rock cut without human hands that smites the first beast of Revelation 13; plus, there will be a great multitude of martyrs. So many, many people will be drawn by the Father, and will need disciplined in the near future. Is the household of faith visible enough that this multitude can find us? Will

we offend these little ones when the head of one organization points at the head of another and says, *He was disfellowshipped!* Well, so was the one doing the pointing. And I know this particular finger-pointing incident, which was done in one organization's February 2002 issue of their slick magazine, has offended a little one. There is no love in finger-pointing, and I'm guilty of it by mentioning this incident. But it has to stop. Resources need pooled. There is a work that has to be accomplished; for by doing that work, we develop the diversified skills we will need in the future. In a way, every member of the household of faith is attending a teachers' college, the analogy Herbert Armstrong used. We have been, since his death, on summer break, the faculty either teaching a reduced summer schedule or on sabbatical. It's time for another semester to begin, perhaps the last before graduation. Somebody has to hand out a syllabus. A multitude is awaiting their chance to be discipled.

3.

Returning to how Jesus answered the rich, young ruler when, recognizing that he had no inherent eternal life within him, the ruler asked what he must do to acquire such life—Jesus told the young man, "You know the commandments: 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother'" (Luke 18:20). The young man recognized the codified law of God, and answered, "I have kept all these since my youth" (verse 21). So part of the doctrine of Jesus is commandment keeping, legalism in the vernacular, that hated signifier that the Evangelical community has labeled as the greatest apostate doctrine, which is akin to a burglar telling her sentencing judge that there is no law against thievery.

Before continuing, I need to return to my discussion of language begun in the "Introduction": the arbitrary assignment of linguistic icons to objects causes language to both reveal and to conceal meaning. Communication is barely possible between reader communities (within a community there is an agreed upon assignment of icons to objects). As such, meaning resides with the reader, not with the author of a text—I cannot direct your assignment of objects for my icons more so than I already have by the repetitive nature of my object-icon usage. Some of my assignments will cause difficulty; for example, the concept of *one* being plural, not singular in its entirety. An example of one as a plural would be Paul writing: "By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal 5:22–23). The English icon *fruit* is singular, reflective of the singular nature of the Greek icon. But that singular icon has plural attributes; so the fruit of the Spirit isn't *love*, but all nine attributes. There isn't many fruits of the Spirit, only one. That fruit will be like a faceted gemstone, each facet reflecting a slightly different quality of light, all contributing to the radiance of

the stone. Someone having the singular fruit of the Spirit will have all of the listed attributes. No attribute will be lacking, because they come as a single entity.

The law of God is a concept similar to the fruit of the Spirit. There is one law that has ten facets, or commandments, a concept present in the Hebrew but one poorly handled by Greeks. We see this concept, though, in James: "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it" (2:10). The ten commandments are not ten individual commandments that we can shop from, choosing to keep this one and that one, but rejecting, particularly, the fourth one. They are a single unit identified by the icon phrase *the law of God*. Christ didn't need to list all ten for the rich young ruler; He needed only to list enough of them so there was no mistaking what He was talking about. So in Jesus' own words, to inherit eternal life a person must keep the law of God.

(A case can be made that Jesus didn't list the first commandment because the rich young ruler was guilty of breaking it, and Jesus didn't intend that the man condemn himself.)

The larger Christian reading communities routinely teach that "the law of God" and "Grace" are opposing paradigms, their teachings based on their readings of Paul's writings, usually with "sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace" (Rom 6:14) at the center of their understandings. But the doctrine of Jesus isn't dependent upon what Paul wrote, but rather, on what Jesus said. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). "They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me" (verse 21). "If you will keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love" (John 15:10). The references to *my commandments* aren't to the new commandment to love one another that Jesus gave His disciples. Rather, they are references to the law of God. The juxtaposition of *my commandments* and *my Father's commandments* can give cause to alternative readings of the text. While disagreements over what is the better reading might produce creative logic pretzels, the best reading should come from Jesus himself:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come to not to abolish but to fulfill.
For I truly tell you, until heaven and earth pass away,
not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass
from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore,
whoever breaks 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 Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt 5:17–20).

Heaven and earth haven't passed away. The plan of God hasn't yet been completed. All has not been accomplished. So the law endures, and whoever teaches that it has been done away will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. For my reading community, nothing could be more easily understood: we are not only to keep the law of God, but we are to teach others to keep it. If someone reads Paul's writing to say that the law isn't to be kept, the person either condemns Paul to being called least in the kingdom, or the person badly misreads Paul.

What are we to think of the righteousness of the Pharisees? In John's usage, *the Jews* means the Pharisees. John records that Jesus was speaking to the Jews, or to the Pharisees, when He, Jesus, said, "Did not Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keep the law" (John 7:19). That probably surprised the Pharisees; for how were they not keeping the law? Telling them how, Jesus cites Isaiah to them: "This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines." You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition" (Mark 7:6–7). So the elevation of human tradition over the law of God produced the righteousness of the Pharisees that Jesus condemned. Good thoughts, good deeds, sacrifice—none of these things will substitute for keeping the law of God.

Today we find the elevation of tradition over the law in the weekly observance of nearly all professing Christians. To break the law of God in the least point is to break the entire law. Which day is the Sabbath? It isn't the eighth day. No amount of human justification about now celebrating Christ's resurrection instead of the seventh-day memorial to Creation will change the law of God.

The Pharisees were determined to snag Jesus: "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" (Matt 22:36). Jesus wasn't biting. Since the law cannot be taken apart, and since the Pharisees weren't keeping it in either spirit or letter, Jesus cited the two summary commandments from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, the first summarizing the first four facets of the law, and the second the last six facets.

Paul, believed by many to be the great antilegalitarian, says, "So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good" (Rom 7:12), and "[The] commandments are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Rom 13:9).

Paul, following on Christ's heels, opens up the linguistic problem that exists: even when written by the finger of the Logos on stone, the codified law conceals as much meaning as it reveals. Because of the arbitrary and restricted way that linguistic icons are assigned to objects, no concise expression of the precepts that the commandments represent can produce in the reader the

meaning originally intended. Some meaning will be lost. Actually, a lot of meaning was lost. After stating that we shouldn't think the law has been done away with, Jesus went on to show how the law should have been read. To be angry, a person is in danger of judgment for murder; to lust after a woman is adultery. It is usually taught that Jesus magnified the law, but that is not really the case. He properly read the law for his disciples and for us. He gave us the model for how to read all of the biblical text.

When outside His creation, the Logos might not have fully appreciated exactly how limited we are by language. But born as Jesus, the Logos understood. He gave us an additional commandment so there could be no mistake about how the law of God should be understood. That additional commandment was to love one another. All of the law is the expression of love for one another, but certainly in the case of the Pharisees, that love had been misplaced, or rather, replaced by self-love. What is hard for too many professing Christians today is to understand how a list of "Don'ts" is an expression of love. Their failure to understand probably stems from their poor understanding of what is the new covenant.

The Logos figuratively married both the house of Israel and the house of Judah on Mt. Sinai. Both houses played the harlot, and went after other gods. The Logos divorced both; then to extend the analogy, He had to die before He could remarry the Church of God, called the Bride of Christ. The terms of the marriage contract with the houses of Israel were agreed upon at Sinai, and constituted the Old Covenant. The New Covenant, then, is the terms agreed upon between the glorified Christ and His Bride. (There was actually a second covenant made at Moab. This the covenant of faith Paul references in Romans 10.)

Saints, though, don't get to renegotiate nuptial terms. In fact, no negotiations occurred. The Logos set the terms:

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people (Jer 31:31–33).

One aspect of this passage that should be noted—God will make a new covenant with both the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Two separate peoples. The nations are still apart when He makes the new covenant, and He makes the covenant with physical individuals. But once the covenant is

made, there is only one nation, the house of Israel, or better, the spiritual house of Israel.

The new covenant that God will make with Israel differs from the covenant made at Sinai. Originally, Moses brought off the mountain only the law of God written on two tablets of stone, but he hurried down, and tossed the tablets aside because Israel was very close to being wiped out, such was their offense in making for themselves a golden calf. Those tablets broke. Figuratively and literally, Moses and the Congregation in the Wilderness broke the law of God before that law could even be implemented. Forty years later Moses told the children of the Israelites who couldn't enter the promised land because of unbelief that,

So now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord your God and his decrees that I am commanding you today (Deu 10:12–13).

Physical Israel was unable to love God and to keep His commandments and decrees. The law and their love were always outside of them. They were not able to internalize the law, and as for love, they were like horses neighing for their neighbors' wives. Love was in even shorter supply than obedience.

The Congregation in the Wilderness, then later, Israel under the Levitical priesthood were unable to do the two things that the Logos required of them: keep the law and have love toward God. Therefore, a new covenant would be offered that corrected the weaknesses of the first covenant. The fault wasn't with the first covenant, but with Israel. The corrections, then, had to be made to Israel. So the new covenant includes the provision that God will put His law within each spiritual Israelite and will write that law on individual hearts. The language is necessarily metaphorical. I doubt whether the heart of a saint has the law of God written on it with a stylus, or even with a ballpoint pen. Sometimes the metaphorical nature of spiritual language clarifies concepts; as often, the metaphors conceal meaning. Writing the law of God on hearts might be a case where more is concealed than revealed.

The law of God is love, even if a person by his or her assignment of objects to the codified linguistic icons doesn't perceive it as such. Christ's magnification of the law was less magnification than it was Him teaching us how to read the inscribed icons of the codified law. In the process of inscription, due to the nature of language love was concealed. So as long as the law remains outside of us, remains as a code that must be deciphered, as icons to which objects must be assigned, love gets squeezed out of the law. The more perfectly we—or in this case, rabbis—try to assign precise objects to the codified icons, the more love is lost, both as a concept and as a practice. Only when the law is internalized and ceases to be a "thing" on which we can

mechanic will physical humans begin to read the law of God as it was intended to be read by the Logos.

In Hebrews chapter 8 where the old and new covenant are compared, the passage from Jeremiah 31 is cited, and going from language to language, the passage changes slightly: "I will put my laws in their minds,/ and write them on their hearts" (verse 10). When the passage from Jeremiah is again cited it's reversed in the 10th chapter of Hebrews: "I will put my laws in their hearts,/ and I will write them on their minds" (verse 16). It appears the writer of Hebrews is quoting Jeremiah from memory, and is relaying the intent of the passage, not the Hebrew words transcribed into Greek. It doesn't appear that the writer of Hebrews had a scroll open before him as I have a Bible open before me as I cite these passages. Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that the new covenant will be the law of God put inside us, in our minds and on our hearts. It also seems reasonable to conclude that the law of God in our minds is governance of how we think, and the law of God on our hearts is an expression of how we show love.

Christ's self-declared vocation was as a prophet, not as a carpenter. At twelve years of age, in the Passover teaching incident, Christ states that He has to be about His Father's business, which wasn't the building trades. So when thirty and beginning His public ministry in Judea, Christ already had some experience with Pharisees and lawyers and assorted word manglers. He knew the human mind in its natural state was (because it has picked up Satan's broadcasting since birth) against God and all things spiritual. On several occasions, He tells the Pharisees that they are of their father, the devil, which wasn't exactly what they wanted to hear. The Pharisees were very pious men. Their expressed desire was to serve the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They had studied the law, and they were very careful to keep it before their eyes. But the law was always outside of them. What they had internalized were traditions and rituals. And with their internalization of traditions, they had so polished the linguistic icons of the codified law that the objects they assigned to these icons were smaller than grains of beach sand, and about as hard. Mercy had been scoured away hundreds of years earlier. Joy was left in Babylon. Kindness was a little stumbling stone that someone dug up and tossed into the sea. Faithfulness was pulverized by Ahab for use as vineyard gravel. So Christ, not wanting a repeat of this lawyering away of meaning, adds a commandment that He should not have had to state: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

Love is the fulfilling of the law of God, but as a culture, we, like the Pharisees did with the law, have tumbled love in a rock polisher, changing grit ever so often, until the linguistic object for the icon *love* is so small the icon can mean whatever we want it to mean today. Love is divorcing before remarrying. Love is warehousing parents in nursing homes until they die. Love is only stealing from the government because our tax dollars went to pay for it. Love

is watching a porn flick before having great sex with your spouse. Love is using bitching as a coping strategy, a statement I heard a week ago. Love is going grocery shopping on the Sabbath, because that's when the stores have their best sales. Love is telling God on which day of the week you'll worship Him. This listing can be endless. And all it proves is that as a culture, we are carnal; that even in how and when we worship the Creator we display our carnality.

We cannot trust ourselves to get "love" right. And until the Father draws us to Him and implants His law in us, He doesn't trust us to comprehend love.

The new covenant is the implanting of the same codified law that physical Israel polished all love from into our hearts and minds. To this legal code, we must add love, Christ's command to disciples. The new covenant is legalism magnified until it reeks of love, drips love, becomes love. It is not a person doing his or her own thing, calling that thing love, and dictating terms to God, who was within about a breath of wiping out ancient Israel because of them doing their own calf-thing.

Teaching that the law of God has been fulfilled and as such is not in effect becomes, now, the single greatest apostate doctrine. It is the calf-thing taken to the power of X. That teaching harms all who hear it. It compounds the trials disciples have now, and it is the lie future disciples will have to unlearn. It is of Satan, who is the god of this world.

Christ said His disciples would be hated by all nations, not by just Islamic, or Communist, or Atheist nations, but by Christian nations also. All nations excludes none. The King of the North, a powerful demon under Satan who is the King of Babylon, will be or try to be a world-ruling government. He will possess an individual who, taking upon himself the authority of the Christian Church, will declare himself the Messiah, and will deceive many. But this King of the North will be dealt a deadly blow by the stone cut without hands—before it's dealt its deadly blow, there will be worldwide revival. This will be "Christianity's" finest hour. But this antiChrist will teach that the law has been fulfilled. It will martyr as many of the saints as it can identify and locate, probably even returning to the practice, as in the Albigensian crusades, of killing them all (i.e., saints and those who shelter saints) and letting God sort them out. It will speak of love and peace, but there will be no love nor peace.

If Christ as first the Logos, then as Jesus says that the new covenant is the internalization of the law of God, then the new covenant is exactly that. It isn't inviting Jesus into one's heart. It isn't some ethereal construct of good intentions. It is being both a doer and a hearer of the perfect law; it is looking into the mirror of the law and seeing oneself looking more like Christ very day. Love is internalized legalism. Love is learning how to read the codified law through the fruit of the Spirit. Love is practicing righteousness. Grace becomes, then, the portion of love we don't yet manifest. Grace is only available to those whom the Father has drawn to Himself; it is not, at this time, available to the world. So a Catch-22 exists: Grace is only available to the

disciples who have internalized the law of God. Without having the law in oneself, grace is not available to the person. This is why we are no longer under the law, but under grace. We are, or at least we should be becoming the law; so the law no longer exists outside of us. But we don't yet keep the law perfectly. Thus, grace, which remains outside of us as a gift from God, becomes our yoke. It does what we cannot do only after we have internalized the law of God. Therefore, we are exempt from the penalty of the law, or the bondage of the law only because our hearts and minds have now become the tablets upon which God has inscribed His perfect law.

Enough repetition? The concept is surprisingly simple once the Father draws us to Himself. We keep the law because we want to. Our desire, the desire of all saints is to keep the law. We judge ourselves harshly when we fail to do what we know is right, and because we judge ourselves, we aren't condemned by the external law. (I know Paul says, "I do not even judge myself" [1 Corth 4:3], but his statement concerns his performance as a minister; his discussion of the Christian struggle in Romans chapter 7 suggests that, indeed, he judges himself.)

The Church of God is right now being judged: because we have the law inside us, we know what righteousness is. We know what we should do in most every circumstance. We make the decision to do what is right. Then too often, we can't live by our decision. Our inner-selves war with our flesh. And sad to say, we cannot defeat our flesh on every occasion. We screw up royally. But we feel guilt when we do. If we aren't careful, we end up hating ourselves and being unable to forgive ourselves. Literally, we judge ourselves and conclude that we deserve death. Only now, that external yoke of grace comes into play. Because of our judgment of ourselves, God not only forgives us but doesn't acknowledge that the sin ever occurred. Therefore, we aren't judged by an external law; so we are not under the law, but under grace.

God has given each saint the earnest of eternal life. The analogy Jesus used to show us our spiritual creation is the metaphor of human conception and birth. In His discourse with Nicodemus, Jesus said, "I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above" (John 3:3). Nicodemus understood "born" as the birthing process, but Jesus' metaphor made no sense to him: "How can anyone be born after having grown old?" (verse 4). Jesus gave His famous answer:

Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and *Pneuma*. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of *Pneuma* is *pneuma*. Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You must be born from above." The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of *Pneuma* (verses 5–8).

Jesus compared *Pneuma*, the Greek icon usually figuratively rendered as Spirit in English, to the wind—and so it is. If it weren't for the long tradition of figuratively translating the linguistic icon, the sense of this passage would be obvious. Jesus' analogy of *Pneuma* to wind fits wonderfully; for *Pneuma* in a literal sense means Breath. The object for the two icons should be identical: a current of air; i.e., a breath or breeze or blast of air. Jesus told Nicodemus that a person must be born by water and by the Breath of God to enter the Kingdom of God. That Breath of God is the creative power of Elohim; it isn't the third personage of a triune deity any more than my breath has personhood. It was by this Breath that the Logos, the Word or Spokesperson for Elohim, created everything that has come into existence. And by this Breath, eternal life is instilled into a disciple following baptism for the remission of sin.

The Evangelical Church has misapplied the principle behind Jesus' words: a person isn't born of *Pneuma* until the person becomes like the wind. No one has yet been born from above, except Jesus. All of the saints are awaiting birth either in the grave or by practicing righteousness today.

The *pneuma* received by a person and implanted within the person after baptism develops as a human embryo develops in the womb. It hasn't been born—a disciple is not a born-again Christian. Rather, the disciple has been begotten of God.

The icon phrase "born again" separates disciples from the visible Church, sifting each into distinct reading communities in the same way Legalism does. The communities that teach the law has been fulfilled and as such done away teach that a Christian has been *born again* when the person invites Jesus into his or her heart. That teaching ignores the essence of the analogy: just as a human infant is conceived when a sperm cell blasts its way into an egg, so too does a saint receive the earnest of eternal life when the Father draws him or her and inscribes His commandments on the person's heart and in the person's mind. The inscription of the law is analogous to the sperm cell gaining entry into the egg. A new creature having eternal life immediately develops, analogous to conception. This new creature has been begotten; it hasn't been born. Yes, life is there, but that life needs the nurturing that the womb provides—and here the analogy somewhat breaks down; for death beds conversions are possible. The Father determines how long the nurturing process needs to be for each individual; He determines when He will draw a person to Himself. That determination isn't our prerogative. So the circumstances of a person's life can be such that little additional nurturing is needed, the parable of the laborers hired morning, noon, and evening. Plus, a person is called for a specific reason; the Father does the hiring. We don't know what experiences are necessary in this physical life for a person to perform a job which we also don't know.

The "born again" phrase is used properly to describe a baptized disciple who is begotten of God, but "born again" as if resurrected in the Great White Throne Judgment. Baptism portrays death and resurrection

We obtain eternal life when we endure to the end, meaning when we endure to death or to our change to a glorious body. Therefore, what we obtain when drawn by the Father is the earnest of that eternal life. The Father will not take that earnest back if we endure to the end. But endurance is the continual looking into the mirror of the codified law, seeing ourselves, judging ourselves, repenting when necessary, and then keeping on keeping the law, which is inscribed within us. It is the application of legalism, coupled with love. It is how we treat one another, how we pay our bills, how we react to offense, how we respond to those who seek to kill us because of how we worship the Father. And there will be those who think they do God a favor when they silence our dissent. We really haven't seen much persecution. For the Church of God, that will change as we again become more visible. Just as Evangelical Christianity will experience tremendous revival, so, too, will the Church of God experience growth beyond our comprehension. This growth will occur when the Father draws the 144,000 and the mixed multitudes. Right now, we in the Church of God might be delaying the Father's timetable, not something I actually believe but a possibility that needs to be expressed.

The analogy of birth continues: nutrients cross the placenta as an embryo develops into a fetus. With a human embryo, what were once identified as gill slots are jaw and neck lines; then hands form. Very early in the embryo's development (now that video images can be taken in the womb), we have found how human we appear. Likewise, our decisions to choose righteousness cause the earnest of eternal life that we have to develop; that earnest is of another spacial dimension, as are angels, the Father, and the glorified Christ. To draw an analogy, in our two-dimensional world we perceive a cylinder as a circle. None of the cylinder's height can be ascertained. The same for the earnest of eternal life: our thoughts are electron flows along electro-chemical pathways that are caused by stimuli, by the firings of nerve endings. Most of our thoughts are responses to electron releases caused by these nerve firings, but some of our thoughts are not reactionary responses to stimuli. For example, if we were to be struck on the cheek, pain sensors would cause reactionary responses of either flight or fight thoughts in our minds—our physical thoughts would be either to strike back harder, to punish the person striking us, or to run, to put distance between us and the person who struck us. To turn the other cheek is not a thought caused by a physical reaction to the stimuli. It is a thought that originates in a portion of the mind that is the equivalent of a two-dimensional circle, whereas a cylinder is actually present. We cannot measure nor photograph the size of the earnest of eternal life that is in our minds. We know it's there because of our desire to keep the law, a desire that is contrary to our natural, reactionary responses to stimuli. We can approximate its three-dimensional location and maybe guess at its size, just as a two-dimensional circle can have its circumference determined. But we cannot enter those dimensions beyond our observations. Thus, when we look into a

mirror, we see ourselves; however, when Christ looks at our image as reflected by mirror of the law, He sees the glory of Himself to one degree or another (2 Corth 3:18). He sees the size of the developing eternal life within us. That eternal life will eventually take control of our natural mind and become our character. Our difficulty is we can't see that eternal life unless we look at ourselves in the mirror of the codified law. Then, at best, we as doers of the law can only see its shadow. Hearers-only of the law see their natural faces, and go their way, blissfully ignorant of how they look to God.

The nourishment of the earnest of eternal life within saints comes from the saints' choice to pursue righteousness with each decision they make. Every time a saint rejects evil and chooses righteousness, that earnest of life grows within him or her. When the saint fails to follow through on his or her decision, grace covers the fault if the saint again chooses righteousness. The unpardonable sin is the transgression of which a person will not repent. So the situation Paul discusses—"with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin" (Rom 7:25)—actually benefits the development of the earnest of life; we must repeatedly make the same decision to choose righteousness. And it is this repetition of choice that causes the earnest of life to grow. No salvation has been promised to our flesh. Our flesh is actually the enemy we fight on a moment by moment basis, that fight developing in us the character of God. Angels might go millennia between decisions; we go microseconds. And grace covers all of the victories of the flesh. We win even when we lose although we should lose less often as that earnest of life grows within us. We should never seek to lose. To do so would be to live according to the flesh, which will cause spiritual death.

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Once again returning to what the rich, young ruler asked Jesus: after Jesus listed enough of the commandments so there could be no doubt about which law Jesus meant to be kept, the young ruler "replied, 'I have kept all these since my youth'" (Luke 18: 21). He knew which set of commandments Jesus was citing, and he had satisfied his obligations as those commandments were then being read by that 1st-Century Jewish community. But when Jesus heard his reply, Jesus "said to him, 'There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, then come, follow me'" (verse 22). Jesus offered the young man discipleship, offered eternal life, but something in the young ruler's reply caused Jesus to include a qualifier, *Sell all that you own and distribute to the poor*. Jesus wasn't against wealth. Contrary to popular belief, Jesus was himself a wealthy man as 2 Corth 8:9 (this verse can be read both mimetically and metaphorically) states. Later in this exchange with the rich young ruler, Jesus tells Peter that the disciples who left possessions and families will "get back very much more in this age, and [will get] in the age to come eternal life" (Luke 18:30), thereby placing an actual value on a relationship with the Father (this statement by Jesus is the basis for

the prosperity gospel, which appears to be a valid reading of text if the historical record of saints and their possessions is ignored). So if Jesus isn't against wealth, the question becomes why would He tell the young ruler to sell all that he had. The answer appears related to the young ruler's reply to Jesus' instructions to keep the commandments.

Jesus, in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, said, "[A]ll who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted" (Luke 18:14). Jesus tells His disciples, "[W]hoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it" (verse 17). Then, by Jesus' statements, there are qualifications for entrance into the kingdom of God. Both of the above qualifications pertain to attitude. The young ruler's attitude was, as revealed by his reply to Jesus, confidence in his own righteousness for having kept the law from his youth. The young ruler wasn't particularly humble or child-like. Jesus equates the young ruler's attitude to him having wealth. What then is there associated with wealth that causes confidence in a person's own righteousness? Peter couldn't answer this question; so he asked Jesus, "Then who can be saved?" (verse 26). Jesus' answer seems almost a *non sequitur*: "What is impossible for mortals is possible for God" (verse 27). I'm certain the disciples didn't believe it was possible for mortal humans to save themselves; so Jesus' answer seems more of a non-answer than an informative response. As already cited, Jesus will tell Peter that to give up possessions and relationships now will bring rewards in this age and eternal life in the age to come. Thus, to make sense of Jesus' answer to the question of who can be saved, what is impossible for a person but possible for God is the change of a person's attitude—the inscription of the law on the heart and mind of a person, which does produce humility and child-like qualities in a person, which de-emphasizes the value of wealth and elevates the value of people and relationships. The historic record for saints who left houses hasn't been that they get back more houses, but that they have enough house that they can worship the Father in truth and sincerity. In exchange for the house they gave up what they received was a relationship with the Father, who has promised to supply their needs and even give them their wants as long as doing so doesn't damage the developing earnest of eternal life within their minds.

Sometimes it's difficult to think outside the figurative box of what can be observed. Scientific investigation is necessarily of the observable and replicable. Species evolution is, therefore, beyond scientific inquiry, not that many intelligent men self-identifying themselves as scientists haven't delved into this field of philosophy, which is what it is. But mathematicians can postulate hypotheses about what occurs in dimensions beyond our own three, or four with time included. Physicists take these calculations and attempt to design experiments to prove them correct or false. In the process, imaginations become inspired by the possibilities of inter-dimensional or extra-dimensional

life. So science fiction and religion, then, become where additional dimensions are most fully explored, with visible Christianity for most of its history being seriously anti-scientific, thereby conceding the field to fiction writers. However, Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* is perhaps the best of the religious fiction, and as such, matches or surpasses the best of what science fiction writers have produced.

The potential of human beings is outside of what can be observed. Our bodies will become corpses, will decay and return to being the elements of the earth. That is what's observable, and is what Solomon wrote: "I said in my heart with regard to human beings that God is testing them to show that they are but animals. For the fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath" (Eccl 3:18–19). Humans have no other life but the breath they breathe. In the passage where the young ruler asks what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus concludes by telling Peter those who have given up everything to follow Him will get "in the age to come eternal life" (Luke 18:30). So until that *age to come* arrives, we have only our breath to sustain what life we have. Everything else is religious fiction, and usually not very good fiction, its purpose being to scare the hell out of recalcitrant tithe payers. Archeologists find this when the dedications of European churches are examined: a disproportionate number of churches were built just prior to 1,000 A.D., when it was preached that Christ's return was imminent. It appears many landowners and petty noblemen gave land and money to the priesthood so insure their place in the advertised resurrection that was promised to occur shortly.

But 1,000 A.D. has become 2,000 A.D., and still no resurrection. Christ still hasn't returned. Most people have quit expecting His return. His Millennium reign over humanity became allegorized away when the Vandals were overrunning Rome in a theological dispute of some significance. Those allegories were revitalized after 1,000 A.D.; they will be again if the Father delays Christ's return for much longer.

Most of the puzzle pieces are in place for Christ's return right now. One of the last pieces was the understanding of Christ's revelation of future events. It appears that a 35-year-old nagging question by one of the senior ministers of the former Worldwide Church of God has opened Revelation, suggesting that we are, indeed, in the time of the end. But the Father has yet to draw, from Satan's administration of this world, a great many people who will become saints. What seems to be occurring in the Church of God as I write this in early 2002 is that a good deal of revelation is being taught. We, perhaps, know more of the plan of God than any collection of saints since the 1st-Century; possibly, we even know more than the original disciples, said with the Freudian qualifier that we do not yet realize how much we know, that we resist discovering the knowledge within ourselves, put there by Christ and the Father when we received the earnest of eternal life. It seems as if Christ is preparing a

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"professional" nucleus of saints who will be able to tutor the hundreds of thousands who will shortly be drafted into the Body of Christ.

The elitism suggested by the Church of God's exclusion of all who haven't been drawn by the Father doesn't imply that the mass of men who live lives of quiet desperation will not have their chance for salvation. Rather, it says that it isn't yet their time. The potential for every person who has drawn breath is to receive eternal life, and to receive a job, about which there is very little revealed since as creatures inside the creation at this time we really cannot comprehend what life outside the creation will be like. It has been speculated that glorified saints would be directing the dressing of distant galaxies, but that is speculation that properly belongs to fiction writers, who will get it mostly wrong. Therefore, our speculation ceases to be valid on the boundary of our dimensional limits. We can have fun playing beyond our limits, but none of that "play" should be considered doctrinal. We are, for lack of a most descriptive expression, flat-worlders speculating about what is outside of spheres within spheres.

Then I was drafted into the Church of God, I engaged the concept of "resurrection," of life returning to a corpse. The biblical narrative asserts that everyone who has died will be resurrected; no one will be forgotten. The textual implication is that help will be needed to manage, to cajole, to calm and to care for the mass of humanity who will be disoriented and frightened or angry when returned to life. The dead know nothing (Eccl 9:5). If a person was about to hack someone to death when that person was killed, that person will still be ready to hack someone to death when resurrected. Of course, he won't have the means, but he won't know that time has passed since he died. He wasn't absent from his body; he was his body. Unless we have the earnest of eternal life within us, we are only our bodies, a point that contradicts what is taught by every major religion except atheism (which is also a faith-based belief paradigm, so by definition, a religion).

The jobs that will be assigned to saints all seem related to supplying the help needed to administer Christ's millennium reign, and to assist in the general resurrection of humanity known as the White Throne Judgment. Angels have been observing humanity for six thousand years; they probably know us fairly well. But angels haven't died. Christ has. We, who will be resurrected to glorious bodies at Christ's return, will have died, with the exception of those who were still alive when He returns. If Moses thought he had problems with the Israelites in the wilderness, he has a surprise coming. Neither Israelites nor gentiles will improve much with death, at least not at first. So a lot of help will be needed by those who can say, *I have been there, done that.*

Contrary to the teachings of Evangelicals, two types of resurrection are mentioned in the biblical narrative. The first type is the reconstruction to physical life after breath has ceased, and flesh has begun to decay. Examples are Mary's brother Lazarus, the widow's son that Elijah stretched himself over

three times, the Shunammite woman's son who Elisha covered with his body, the man thrown atop Elisha's corpse, and all those who left their graves when the veil was rent by Christ's death. A prophesied future example is the valley of dry bones, where all of both houses of Israel are brought back to life. In each of these examples, breath was returned to the corpse. Physical processes restarted, and the person lived again. In the examples that have occurred the person was not judged by God, nor given a glorious body as described in 1 Corinthians 15:35–49. The person was simply reconstructed from the elements of the earth, then given again the breath of life from God. The person wasn't a soul reincarnated in a different body, another variation of how the lie Satan told Eve has come down through time. Rather, the person received or will receive his or her breath back in a physical body like the one he or she had before death. That doesn't seem like too great a feat for Elohim, who spoke the universe into existence. It is certainly less of a feat than resurrecting saints into glorious bodies.

The second resurrection template is Christ's, who was given a glorious body and life as He had it before. What must be understood about the epistles of the apostles is that they were letters to saints, not to the remnants of the crowds that had followed Christ, nor to those who were trying to take the kingdom of God by force. So Paul's epistles to the Corinthians were written to a select audience, saints at Corinth and elsewhere. The resurrection Paul discusses is of the saints, those whom the Father has chosen to be vessels for special use—they will put on incorruptibility, or in modern parlance, be reconstructed into bodies of elemental energy, unlike Lazarus, Mary's brother, who was resurrected into a mortal body, the same one he had before it had begun its decaying process.

Before progressing farther, the most troublesome passage for the household of faith to explain to nonBelievers should be examined here. It is the parable of Lazarus and Dives, and it should be actually one of the easiest parables to explain:

There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He called out, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames." But Abraham said, "Child,

remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us." He said, "Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment." Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them." He said, "No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent." He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:19–31).

Everyone, inside and out of the household of faith, tends to misread this parable; for first, the audience to whom Christ was speaking—"Pharisees, who were lovers of money" and who "ridiculed" Christ (verse 14)—must be considered. The parable's last sentence contains the essence of what Christ was trying to communicate: if these Pharisees would mock Him for saying that they couldn't serve both "God and wealth" (verse 13), Abraham was not their spiritual father; and if they could find no mercy in the writings of Moses, they wouldn't then or in the future listen to Him even though He would rise from the dead as again part of Elohim, the creating godhead.

I have said this before: I offend some Believers when I tell them that there is fiction in the Bible—the story of Lazarus and Dives is a fiction that Jesus used to indict the Pharisees, then in his audience, of their false teachings. These Pharisees had mocked Him when he told the parable of the dishonest manager, who had been given notice that he was being fired. This manager wonders what he will do for he is "not strong enough to dig" and too "ashamed to beg" (Luke 16:3), an apt description of the Pharisees, who have been managers of the faith of Israel. This manager decides to cut some under-the-table deals to set himself up financially, an indictment of these Pharisees that is somewhat general in nature. This manager's master actually applauds the manager's shenanigans, which says much about who these Pharisees actually serve (Jesus elsewhere says their father is the devil). Then Jesus delivers His message about the person faithful in little will be faithful in much, and Jesus' message was well enough understood by the Pharisees that they ridiculed Him. Their ridicule was a challenge to Jesus to prove what He just said in His general indictment of them.

The 34th chapter of Ezekiel is an indictment of the shepherds of Israel. This indictment reaches forward to when Christ will return to establish His

Millennium reign, but it pauses to specifically address the Messiah beginning to gather sheep scattered by their shepherds. As such, the chapter indicts latter day shepherds, or pastors, but it also addresses the Pharisees as the shepherds in place when Christ came the first time. The Logos or spokesperson for Elohim was born as Jesus—and as Jesus, the Logos was in no mind to be mocked by these shepherds who had scattered the sheep. It is a testament to Jesus' patience that these Pharisees were able to walk away from this encounter. When Elisha was mocked, Elisha cursed his mockers, and two she-bears mauled 42 of the boys. Jesus would have been justified to have done likewise.

Instead of having His mockers mutilated, Jesus has the last word: He said, "But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one stroke of a letter in the law to be dropped" (Luke 16:17). Then Jesus turns His general indictment of the Pharisees in His audience into a specific indictment by detailing the area in which these Pharisees had been compromising the law: "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and whoever marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery" (verse 18). These Pharisees had been, for a little money, allowing unjustified divorce decrees.

Jesus, immediately after bringing a specific indictment against these Pharisees who had been compromising the law, relates the fiction of Lazarus and Dives. Abraham is often mistakenly read as being alive in heaven, but Jesus said, "No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man" (John 3:13); so Abraham and Lazarus cannot be in heaven. They are not in Hades; for a chasm separates them from Dives. They are in "story." They exist only in this parable which fits into the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition of *fortune reversal after death* tales, a form of Cynic narrative which all educated persons in the 1st-Century would recognize, and a form which scholars today should recognize with equal rapidity. The Lazarus and Dives story wasn't recent history; that is, it wasn't the literal story of two men who died during Christ's ministry in Judea. Abraham isn't in heaven. This parable is religious fiction which has received even greater acceptance than has Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The recounting of this fiction is certainly inspired. It shows the patience of Jesus, the scope of His education; it, along with the overturning of the moneychangers' table, shows Him angry, but sinning not. It shows why the Pharisees had to kill Him. And it provides educated readers today with a chuckle. Unfortunately, illiterate or marginally literate readers accept this fiction as fact, as do too many of my beginning Composition students when first encountering Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal."

Metonymically, the Pharisees were the rich man who showed no mercy to an oppressed laity. They did not believe Moses and the prophets. Jesus knew it would be futile to cite Moses or the Writings to them; so He gave them a Greek story to which they might relate. In a very real sense, Jesus turned these Pharisees mocking back upon themselves by telling them a Greek story. **He,**

by His composition of the Lazarus and Dives parable, said to them both in content and in form that these Pharisees were not of Abraham's seed, the claim they valued most, but that these Pharisees were as Greek as any of the Greeks. He called them gentiles without using the word.

In the Lazarus and Dives parable Jesus wasn't negating the importance of the resurrections from the dead, but He was using a fictional construct to make a point to mocking, money-hungry Pharisees. Paul used a similar strategy on Mars Hill when he quoted lines from Greek poets to the assembled philosophers. In both cases, the text is audience-specific. Both Jesus' and Paul's use of Greek poetics conveyed more-encompassing messages to their immediate audience than either's use of Hebraic poetics would have. In both cases, the strategy loses the additional meanings when read by audiences unfamiliar with Greek poetics.

Luke writes without using transitions between his paragraphs, so his narrative flow seems disjointed. His literary style isolates consecutive events from their context. His style asks more of his reader than, say, Matthew's style does, and it assumes his reader possesses considerable textual sophistication.

Pharisees had previously tried to match wits with Christ, and on each occasion, they lost. On this occasion, they not only lost, but they were humiliated in such a subtle way that generations of scholars haven't fully appreciated how thoroughly Christ bested them. Luke evidently did; for he relates the incident in sufficient richness that a reader can grasp the specific indictment Jesus made of these Pharisees, even to his citing the violation of the law they were committing (i.e., granting unjustified divorce decrees, probably for payoffs). The reader can also grasp Jesus' reversal of humiliation; for this parable, by its Greek content and form, stands out from all of the other parables recorded. He humiliated them in a way that these Pharisees understood, but in a way that few others in the mostly illiterate audience could grasp. In other words, Jesus used these Pharisees' education as the means for the Pharisees to understand what he had done to them. But no one with less education in the audience would have any appreciation for what had been accomplished. It was a "silent" humiliation, in that only the ones upon whom the figurative tables had been turned knew that their humiliation had taken place. These Pharisees couldn't even point to Jesus and say to the rest of Jesus' audience, *See, he is like us*, for only they knew how badly they had been bested. They and Luke, the educated physician.

The parable of Lazarus and Dives verified already existing mental paradigms of the underworld for Greek-educated scholars in the first few centuries after Christ's crucifixion. These readers of Luke's account did not have to rid themselves of their own understandings of the underworld, of their neoPlatonic beliefs; rather, they could superimpose their understandings over the Hebraic paradigm of resurrection to create a logically-devoid construct of an immortal soul escaping to heaven at a person's death, then returning with

Christ to receive a glorified body when Christ returns to earth, with that good soul's parallel being an evil soul going to Hades to be punished without ever receiving a glorified body upon which flames would have no effect. This parable, more so than any other, separates who is genuine from who isn't.

Returning now to the discussion of resurrections: the resurrection in the valley of dry bones is a return to mortal life, not to incorruptibility:

O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord (Ezek 37:4–6).

In Ezekiel's vision, that is what happened. "[B]reath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude" (verse 10). Each of them became, again, a breathing creature. Their return to life is futuristic, as is its Revelation counterpart. As such, both resurrections are seen in visions, but the possibility of such resurrections to mortal life (*life* and *breath* are tightly linked in this Ezekiel passage) was prefigured by Mary's brother Lazarus's resurrection.

The plan of God calls for the mass of humanity to be resurrected to physical life after Christ's Millennium reign. In that resurrection, "the dead, great and small, [stood] before the [great white] throne, and the books [i.e., the Bible in this context] were opened. Also another book was opened, the book of life" (Rev 20:12). For the dead to stand, life must be returned to them.

The passage in Revelation is very spare, but when coupled with what Jesus taught on the 8th Day of Tabernacles, the suggestion is the mass of humanity will now, for the first time, have the Bible opened to them, great and small. This mass of humanity doesn't include those changed in the resurrection of firstfruits when Christ returned, nor does it include those who will be resurrected into the lake of fire. For this mass of humanity described in the passage, this physical resurrection will be the first chance they have had to have their names written in the Book of Life—the passage indicates that the Book of Life was opened for them. Between this time and when "anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire" (verse 15), "Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire," which "is the second death, the lake of fire" (verse 14). However, Death and Hades had first emptied themselves of their dead (verse 13).

Jesus, to His disciples, spoke of two resurrections: "Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and will come out—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life [the First Resurrection], and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation [a later resurrection]" (John 5:28–29). Those drawn by the Father will be in one of two resurrections, neither of which have judgment applied after the resurrection; for Jesus also said, "Very truly, I tell you, anyone

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who hears my words and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgement, but has passed from death to life" (verse 24). So saints who become part of the resurrection when Christ returns to begin His Millennium reign pass directly from death to life. They do not come under judgment so they cannot be part of the White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20, and vice versa. The dead of the White Throne Judgment haven't been previously judged; so they are not in the second category Jesus mentions—*those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation*—for to be resurrected to condemnation implies previous judgment, or judgment while the person was still alive. Saints, therefore, who haven't done evil will be resurrected when Christ returns, and those who have done evil, to the lake of fire. No further judgment pertains to saints.

Thus, through Jesus' teachings and His revelation of future events He verifies a remaining three-tiered system of resurrections for humanity: (1) those who hear His words and believe the Father; (2) those who hear His words and don't believe the Father (i.e., the Nicolaitans who will not have Christ rule over them); and (3) those who have never heard His words, nor know of the Father, nor have been judged and assigned to the resurrection of condemnation. Judgement at resurrection is not on those in tier one; for Peter writes, concerning the saints, "the time has come for judgement to begin with the household of God" (1 Peter 4:17). Those in tier one will have been judged before their deaths. Likewise, those in tier two have also been of the household of God and were judged before their deaths and have been assigned to the resurrection of condemnation. So judgement after death only applies to those in tier three; for those in tier one pass directly *from death to life*, and those in tier two are already in *the resurrection of condemnation*. This concept of tiered salvation is inherent in humanity being created as vessels of special-use and ordinary-use, and in the references to firstfruits, which implies a later, or main harvest.

After the Book of Life is opened to the dead, great and small, "the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books" (Rev 20:12). This second occurrence of the icon phrase *the books* seems to differ from the first. The Bible translates as *the books*, but the deads' works aren't recorded in the Bible; so this second usage of the phrase seems to refer to books of remembrance that are kept by God. No textual implication exists to suggest that this is yet a judgment to condemnation, but rather, a determination of how these individuals' recorded deeds stack up against the Biblical standard, with the Book of Life open to them. Therefore, the dead, great and small, will have in this White Throne Judgment their first chance to receive the gift of eternal life. This will not be a second chance at salvation for them. They are not part of tier two, who, like tier one, have already been judged—those individuals in tier two knew Christ and would not have Him rule over them; they are the servants who sent a delegation after the nobleman in the parable of the pounds; they are Nicolaitans.

The unpardonable sin cannot be committed until a person knowingly refuses to repent of sin, which is lawlessness, or transgressing the law (1 John 3:4). A person can sin without knowledge of the law, but condemnation for one's sins comes with knowledge. Thus, God as Love will not condemn anyone to the Second Death until the person knows the condemnation that is of the law, and has had a chance to repent and to have his or her name written in the Book of Life. This is the message Christ preached on the Great Day of the Feast when He said, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink" (John 7:37). This message is to everyone, not just for the predestined firstfruits.

One resurrection has occurred, Christ's. There is a resurrection at Christ's return, the conjoined events represented by the Feast of Trumpets; another one at the end of the Millennium, when the majority of humanity will have its first chance to accept Christ as savior, the event commemorated by the Great Day (or 8th Day) of the Feast of Tabernacles; and a resurrection to condemnation, which is the lake of fire. God intends that no one is lost or loses out on his or her chance for salvation, but that all come to the fullness of Christ. The Father loves the person who never heard of Christ enough that He designed into His plan provisions to account for the flat tire that prevented some Chinese peasant from hearing about Jesus. God is not a respecter of persons even though He is not presently offering salvation to everyone. He is not unfair, creating some humans for the expressed purpose of frying in hell. Also, God isn't responsible for letting Little Tommy die, the literary shorthand for bad things happening to good people.

Satan's accusation against God was and remains that God is unfair. But the fairness of God is beyond measure: Satan rebelled and was defeated, but God has allowed him to remain as the prince of this world; and while reserving His right to intervene, God has allowed Satan to try and prove that a way of competition, the way of self-centeredness, will produce better results than a way of love, of giving, of outgoing concern for others. God has allotted approximately 6,000 years to Satan for this demonstration of competitiveness versus cooperation. He has, for the benefit of the two-thirds of the angels that didn't rebel and for those participating in this demonstration (i.e., humanity), chosen to keep hands off, intervening only when necessary to ensure that Satan gets his full 6,000 years, that humanity didn't/doesn't destroy itself and the earth ahead of time. The Father will then have Christ rule the earth for 1,000 years to show how rule should be administered before Satan is loosed for a little while to test all of those individuals born in the Millennium and who never had to live under Satan's reign. The angels can see for themselves whose way produces life; they can then make an informed choice. Afterwards, the majority of humanity will be resurrected, and will also be able to make informed choices. Few, if any, will choose Satan's way. The Father will lay to rest for all time charges that He is unfair. Satan's rebellion will then finally be

over, erased from memories. The bad things that have happened to basically good people are the result of Satan's administration now, while he is the prince of this world and while God has chosen to keep hands off so no additional charges of unfairness can be brought by the demons against him.

Apparently the Logos intended to use ancient Israel to demonstrate how society should be organized; He gave His law to them for that purpose. But they failed to demonstrate anything other than without the law of God being internalized, the law cannot be kept and actually becomes a stumbling stone. Thus, Babylon replaced Israel as the prevailing society. The focus of human affairs switched from Israel to Gentiles: Nebuchadnezzar's vision of a human statue represents the entirety of the times of the Gentiles. Satan won a piece in his chess game with Elohim, but he remains unaware, that he has lost the game.

In fairness to humanity, Christ will resurrect those individuals in tier two and three to physical life as seen in the vision of the valley of dry bones, where the bones are identified as the whole house of Israel. The whole house of Israel will not be resurrected until the White Throne Judgement. Apparently, they will be resurrected as breathing creatures, meaning that if they are not given glorious bodies when their names are written in the Book of Life, they will go into the lake of fire as physical human beings; as such, they won't last long.

Worms that don't die are maggots; by metamorphosis, the worms become flies. And an ever-burning gehenna fire was Jerusalem's garbage fire in the 1st-Century. As long as it was fed garbage, it burned. Because of the size of the city, it was continually fed garbage so it burned day and night, week after week. But it doesn't burn today. It consumed its fuel and went out. Same for the lake of fire: when the new earth and new heaven arrive, there will be no more fuel for the lake of fire. It will cease. The physical human beings who were either resurrected to condemnation, or who in the White Throne Judgement elected not to accept eternal life through Christ and as such didn't receive a glorious new body will be utterly burned up. But their suffering will have ceased when they again have lost their breath. God as Love takes no pleasure in their suffering and will want it to end as quickly as possible. In His love for them, they will be as if they were never born.

The fate of those human beings who receive a body of elemental energy is for them to become siblings to Christ, who as the first born of many brethren will always remain their elder brother. The saints are to become God, the one tenet of the doctrine of Jesus that Satan cannot tolerate, nor can his disguised ministers of righteousness. The Church of God, at times, has been embarrassed to boldly state this truth because of the amount of flack it generates from visible Christianity. It inevitably produces persecution, which Jesus promises His disciple will happen. Perhaps the Church of God became so gun-shy during its first millennium and a half that for the past five centuries we have kept our heads down, not wanting to make of ourselves easy targets. If

we talk about love and grace and mercy, we don't sound too bad to the visible church, who condemns our Sabbath keeping. But when we label the trinity an apostate doctrine, when we declare that our human potential is to become God, when we state that no one is ever going to heaven except the One who came from heaven, when we scoff at teachings of humanity having an immortal soul, we make large targets that can be easily attacked. But we haven't denied Jesus, nor His doctrine. The shame is when we attack ourselves after making of ourselves targets. A person would think with the earnest of eternal life in us, we would be smarter than that. However, in the parable of the pounds, seven of the ten servants to whom the nobleman gave a pound sent a delegation after the noblemen, saying, *We will not have this man rule over us*. These seven servants are Nicolaitans, men and women who exercise heavy handed rule over the saints while teaching lawlessness. They are the ones who attack the backsides of saints; they desire followings for themselves. They do not understand how light a hand Christ uses in guiding the Church of God.

4.

When Jesus magnified the law, or better, demonstrated how the law should have been read since Sinai, He probably understood that within a short while the linguistic objects for His icons would again shrink. Love would again be wrung from the law. Although drawn disciples would have the law written on their hearts and minds, when these disciples looked into the mirror of the perfect law to, as James writes, act and to persevere, they would find polished icons separated from their objects, each icon small enough to fit into a locket with a painting of an effeminate Jesus and a lock of hair that could be anybody's. The law would be stone cold, as lifeless as pen strokes on parchment. Thus, on that last Passover, after washing the disciples' feet and dismissing Judas Iscariot, Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34–35).

A few minutes later on that last Passover evening, Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15); and "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love" (15:10); and "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (verse 12). Jesus doesn't want any additional misreading of the law; he adds a single new *commandment* to the plural *commandments* so that love must be inserted into a person's life. He doesn't say all one has to do is *love one another*, then leave what constitutes *love* up to the individual. Rather, in His great commission given to His disciples after His resurrection, Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples . . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt

28:20). And what was Jesus' teaching concerning the law: "[W]hoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 5:19). At the core of what Jesus commanded His disciples to teach future disciples was to keep the commandments, and to keep an additional commandment to love one another.

It is a mistake to go to Paul's writings and argue that a Christian doesn't have to keep the commandments. Paul would be chagrined to learn that his epistles have been used to negate what Jesus taught; for negation of Jesus' words were never Paul's intentions. Rather, Paul's intentions were to combat the misapplication of the eternal law, which had been squeezed loveless by centuries of legal wrangling. Peter, even with the earnest of life in him, succumbed to these misapplications when he sat with gentiles only when no Jews were around. Where is love in racism? The question answers itself. Peter failed to love the gentile converts; he failed to keep the additional commandment Jesus gave to all of the disciples. And Paul corrected him, as was appropriate. Paul certainly loved mightily, but he disputed with Barnabas over John Mark going with them. So even with the law within us, we remain a mixed bag. Hopefully, the mix favors righteous more with each passing year; it should. It will as long as we don't quit.

Writing to disciples, John says in his first epistle,

For this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. We must not be like Cain who was from the evil one and murdered his brother. . . . Do not be astonished, brothers and sisters, that the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another (3:11–14).

The juxtaposition of *Cain* with *from the beginning* suggests the beginning John references isn't Jesus' calling of disciples, but rather, Eden. The suggestion seems more certain considering that Elohim barred Adam from taking of the tree of life. From the Adam and Eve's forbidden fruit luncheon until Christ's resurrection, death reigned. Each person had to pay the penalty for his or her own sins, and that penalty was death. Adam placed Eve and his lust for her before God; he sinned. Cain sinned. God warned Cain that sin lay at his door before Cain murdered his brother; so the textual implication is that both Adam and Cain knew the law of God, and had been instructed as to how they should love one another.

The world that has developed from Adam, like Adam, hid from God until its shame grew into hate for God. It didn't, and doesn't have love for its neighbors, and that lack of love is the prevailing characteristic of the apostate church, which looks like the world and is of the world and hates the Church of God because of our "legalism." Yet it is our legalism that stops saints from

lusting after their neighbor's spouse, from stealing, from moving boundary markers or fences, from bearing tales; the list goes on infinitely.

The visible apostate church has no love for all of the people who have never known Jesus, who have lived and died and did so without hearing about Jesus, without believing that Jesus as God came in the flesh and died for them, without being drawn by the Father. It teaches a forever-tormented doctrine that has so little Scriptural support that by its reasoning dogs can go to heaven if they are good.

To love one another is to have life. The linguistic object of this sort of *love* encompasses keeping the law, as well as "to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). We are not free to assign an object to this icon as we arbitrary do to other signifiers. Our options are to either accept or reject what Jesus teaches. We either will have by our actions love for Jesus and the Father and fellow disciples, or we can speak works of love, then by our actions reject Jesus as the Christ. Our words aren't what matter; our actions define our relationship with the Father and with our high priest, Christ.

When considering the special relationship with the Father that being drawn by Him allows, it doesn't seem possible that a drawn-out disciple would reject the love of Christ and the Father. But in the parable of the pounds in Luke 19, Jesus as the young nobleman has a rebellion in the land he left:

A nobleman went to a distant country to get royal power for himself and then return. He summoned ten of his slaves, and gave them ten pounds, and said to them, "Do business with these until I come back." But the citizens of his country hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, "We do not want this man to rule over us." When he returned, having received royal power, he ordered his slaves, to whom he had given money, to be summoned so he might find out what they had gained by trading. The first came forward and said, "Lord, your pound has made ten more pounds. He said to him, "Well done, good slave! Because you have been trustworthy in a very small thing, take charge of ten cities. Then the second came, saying, "Lord, your pound has made five pounds." He said to him, "And you, rule over five cities." Then the other came, saying, "Lord, here is your pound. I wrapped it up in a piece of cloth, for I was afraid of you, because you are a harsh man; you take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow." He said to him, "I will judge you by your own words, you wicked slave! You knew, did you, that I was a harsh man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? Why then did

you not put my money into the bank? Then when I returned, I could have collected it with interest." He said to the bystanders, "Take the pound from him and give it to the one who has ten pounds." (And they said to him, "Lord, he has ten pounds!") "I tell you, to all those who have, more will be given; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. But as for these enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and slaughter them in my presence" (19:12–27).

Seven servants of the nobleman, who metaphorically represents Jesus, sent a delegation after him to say, "We do not want this man to rule over us." These servants weren't strangers (people who didn't know the nobleman), nor were they servants of another nobleman. Rather, these servants are *Christians* who do not want Christ to rule over them. They are disciples of the household of faith. They have received the earnest of eternal life. But for whatever reason, they, having been once enlightened, have rejected the light, choosing instead darkness, thereby making their election into the lake of fire sure. They have no love for fellow saints, nor for Christ, regardless of how many good feelings rattle around in their hearts as if their hearts were the buttons of sidewinders.

Jesus said, "Beware that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Messiah!' and they will lead many astray" (Matt 24:4–5). Although I believe this passage pertains to the antichrists John mentions and to the two antiChrists to come (the type and antitype fulfillment of prophesy), the seven of ten servants who would not have Christ rule over them linguistically constitute *many*, which doesn't apply to the few marginalized sects still keeping the commandments of God. In usage, *many* is somewhat synonymous with *majority*; so when Christ spoke of deception, He could well be referring to servants who reject His rule. Seventy percent of anything is *many*.

In His letter to the church at Pergamum, Christ wrote, "So you also have some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans" (Rev 2:15). In His letter to the church at Ephesus, He says, "Yet this is to your credit: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate" (Rev 2:6). My understanding of who the Nicolaitans were/are pertains to individuals having rule over the laity, especially heavy handed rule. Historically, Nicolaitans practiced lawlessness—Christian liberty to the extent they not only didn't condemn immorality and idolatry, but practiced both. Their contention seemed to be that the Law of God had been fulfilled; hence, done away with. So not by their words but by their works, they rejected Christ's authority over them; thus, Christ said that He hated their works.

In the parable of the pounds, the nobleman said that "as for these enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and slaughter them in my presence." At the conclusion of Christ's sermon on the

Mount, He said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?' Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers'" (Matt 7:21–23). So rebellion against Christ is a very serious offense. Nicolaitans practiced and still practice such rebellion.

Doing miracles, casting out demons, preaching in Christ's name, preaching that Christ is Lord—none of these are necessarily signs of true discipleship. The evidence of discipleship is who or what fellowship is most willing to be ruled by Christ. For lack of a better criteria, true disciples are those individuals who keep the commandments, and who teach other disciples to keep the commandments of God.

*

Love is the consistent theme of Jesus' teachings, but it isn't the touchy-feely love of the 20th-Century. It is the love produced by righteousness, a linguistic icon that has been badly abused and often neglected. It has an object—if we could remember what was once assigned to the icon. Jesus had to use figurative language to attach the object to the icon; e.g., "You are the light of the world. . . . [L]et your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works" (Matt 5:16). So part of righteousness is good works, according to Jesus (we use Jesus' teaching to understand Paul's).

Part of righteousness is being genuine in your concern for others. Jesus used the example of publicly trumpeted giving as what not to do; for works done to garner the praise of other men or women have received their rewards. These works were done to stroke the doers' vanity, and if someone's vanity needs stroked rather than crushed, the person lives with a four hundred pound housecat, a beast that purrs loudly but one that will devour the person and his friends. Certainly the person is not "poor in spirit," nor "meek," nor truly "merciful" (Matt 5:3,5,7); rather the person is egotistical, vain, phoney. The person is, in the vernacular of the American Southwest, all hat and no boots.

Part of righteousness is giving to those people from whom you expect nothing, people who are unable to advance careers or return a larger gift or help you in any way (Matt 6:2–4). Giving to place the receiver under obligation is the principle behind potlatch giving, the opposite of love.

Part of righteousness is forgiving trespasses—forgiving those people who have really harmed you. You might have the legal right to sue for redress, but can you absorb the loss? the insult? the injustice? If you can, why don't you? We live in a litigious culture, ever looking to use an overburdened court system to bludgeon anyone who has wronged us or has tread on our "rights." I was, not long ago, sued over a debt. The judge asked the plaintiff why she didn't walk-away from her claim. She couldn't answer. The thought of not suing had never occurred to her. And as the matter turned out, I won a small judgment

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against her. So part of righteousness is allowing God to rectify wrongs, to make us whole; is forgiving those who have wronged us (Matt 6:14–15).

Part of righteousness is a person's relationship with God: Christianity is a way of life, not a public profession of faith through prayer or fasting or mourning garb. It is not what's on the outside of a person, but rather, what the person is. Therefore, it is what the person does in the privacy of his or her mind; it is the thoughts of a person, the stolen moment of prayer, the attitude on a bad-hair day or when the neighbor's dog digs in your flowerbed or when the hook breaks while landing the largest bass you have ever seen. It is where you steer your car when a turtle crosses the road. It is what you do with an empty Coke bottle while driving. It is all of those little decisions that really have nothing to do with religion, or with studying and praying to show yourself approved of God. It is who you are and what you do when no one is looking, except God.

There is nothing touchy-feely about making difficult decisions that will remain unknown to your surrounding world when a little compromise would seem more logical. There is nothing easy or soft about real righteousness. If there were, would the goal be worth the pursuit?

5.

When the rich, young ruler asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus' response was, *You know the commandments* (Luke 18:20), His response suggesting that everything needed to receive eternal life was contained in the perfect law of God. But after the young ruler replied that he had kept all of the commandments since his youth, Jesus added another thing for him to do: sell all he had and give to the poor. Apparently the young ruler's reply was the wrong answer, or at least, an answer that revealed another problem.

In Jesus' sermon on Mount, He shows His disciples how the commandments should be read when He magnified them. If the young ruler had asked Jesus how he should keep the commandments, perhaps he would still have been told to sell everything since his possessions were his god, but the possibility exists that if the ruler's response had indicated a more teachable attitude, possessions wouldn't have been the problem he needed to overcome. After all, the Jerusalem conference recorded in Acts 15 sets a very low admission bar for entry into the household of faith, with the expectation that the gentile converts would hear the Law of Moses read in a synagogue each Sabbath and thereby gain additional knowledge of God.

John was probably at the Jerusalem conference recorded in Acts. He would have seen the fruit of Paul's ministry, and he lived long enough to see errors enter the household of faith, errors that spun off any number of antichrists. He was with Jesus, was the disciple Jesus loved most, and was the

one to whom the glorified Jesus revealed the sealed sequence of future events. So when John writes,

Do not love the world or the things of the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world. And the world and its desires are passing away, but those who do the will of God live forever (1 John 2:15–17).

We can assume the rich, young ruler loved the world even though he claims to have kept the law since his youth. The two positions are mutually exclusive even though the commandments pertain to relationships with first God, then parents, then one's neighbors. John's sixty years of experience (by the time he writes this epistle) of discipling converts, coupled with inspiration of the Holy Spirit has convinced him of the truth Jesus spoke when He said, "You cannot serve God and wealth" (Matt 6:24 and later, Luke 16:13). If the young ruler were serving his riches, then he had not truly kept the commandments. He had an idol separating him from God. He had deceived himself into thinking that he had kept the commandments from his youth, and he walked away from a possible position in the first resurrection.

Deception of various types have caused tens of thousands in the past generation to walk away from their callings. Some are beginning to filter back. Hopefully all of them will return before their allotted days pass. But new deceptions appear faster than old ones can be combatted—the new ones are really old ones in new clothes. If they worked for Satan seventeen hundred, eighteen hundred, nineteen hundred years ago, why shouldn't he recycle them. They are as effective now as then. People haven't evolved deception whiskers that will warn us when we get too close to a deception, as cats' whiskers reveal obstacles in the dark to them. Rather, Christ seems to allow these deceptions to continually test who is genuine, who isn't.

In His Olivet discourse, Jesus warns His disciples of what they should beware: "Beware that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, I am the Messiah! and they will lead many astray" (Matt 24:4–5). The Church of God has traditionally read the passage to say the *many* won't come saying they are the Messiah, but that Christ is, this reading based upon 2 Corinthians 11 and Revelation 6. Certainly some have come claiming to be the returned Christ, but they have deceived no one, not something that will be said of the type and antitype antiChrists, especially the antitype antiChrist when he comes looking like a lamb but speaking like the old dragon.

The traditional reading of Matthew 24:4–5 by the Church of God retains sufficient textual clarity to support the contention that most individuals and churches preaching a message about Christ are leading people astray; for they do not teach keeping any commandments, but teach that all one has to do to

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be saved is believe Jesus is the Christ, profess the same, and invite Jesus into one's heart. This teaching comes from a misapplication of a time-specific prophesy in Joel:

I [the Lord] will show portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls (Joel 2:30–32).

Both Peter and Paul cite this passage. Neither appreciate that the heavenly signs belong to the trumpet plagues that will occur in the Tribulation. They couldn't know that they weren't living during the time Joel references: the Book of Revelation hadn't been given.

When Paul speaks specifically about the salvation of Israel, his people, he believes he is living in the last days prior to Christ's return as King of kings; he believed he was living just prior to the *great and terrible day of the Lord*. He didn't have the benefit of having Christ reveal that these heavenly signs are the manifestations of the opening of the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12–17) and seventh seal (Rev. 8:7–12). Therefore, Paul didn't know that Christ's return was in the far future, that Joel's time-specific prophesy was not for then. It would have been cruel of Christ to tell Paul that after all he, Paul, went through to raise up churches, to spread the gospel, that He, Christ, wouldn't return for two millennia.

John faced the same problem: when writing his epistles, John believed he was living in the endtime and that Christ would return shortly. He wrote, "Children, it is the last hour! As you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. From this we know that it is the last hour" (1 John 2:18). John was looking out over the visible Christian church and seeing evidence that Christ's return was eminent based on the false teachings as he understood what Christ had taught him about the antiChrist. He expected the man of perdition to be revealed any moment. Then, Christ gave to John His revelation of futuristic events. John writes no more about the end being at hand; for until Christ revealed the time order of events, prophesy remained as Daniel was told, "'Go your way, Daniel, for the words are to remain secret and sealed until the time of the end'" (Dan 12:9). Daniel received the prophesy of the kings of the North and South warring, but he wasn't able to understand what he received—understanding wasn't possible until the Lamb of God broke the seals of the scroll written within and without. John sees those seals being broken when he's in vision on the Day of the Lord. But John wasn't able to reveal all he saw (Rev 10:4).

Paul thought he was living in the time of the end, and he thought he understood Joel, but when he wrote understanding the future wasn't possible for anyone. Christ hadn't yet revealed the vision of future events to John when Paul cited Joel; therefore, the time-specificness of the prophecy Joel records could only be comprehended after the Lamb opened the seals. We have the benefit of knowing what Paul did not even though what Paul writes is inspired, as is John's declaration that we are in the last days. Christ chose not to reveal to them when they wrote how long it would be before He returned. It should also be remembered, the Bible is audience specific: it is written for saints, individuals whom the Father has drawn. It cannot be understood by descendants of the crowds that followed Jesus until individual members from those crowds are drawn by the Father.

Herein lies the problem: the crowds that followed Jesus and their descendants need salvation, and recognize their need. All sorts of "religions" were conceived to satisfy this inner need of people; the history of the world is more the history of religion than even of war, as evidenced by Nebuchadnezzar's statue. But the natural minds of men and women, under the sway of Satan who remains as the ruler of this world and prince of the airwaves and who "disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Corth 11:14), are hostile to God. Humanity will not submit to God. The story of ancient Israel is the evidence.

To satisfy the void people feel in their lives, a void left in them at creation so that someday they could be drawn by the Father, humanity invents religions, worshiping what they fear most. Some of the systems became complex, even to the point of destroying the culture with their many dos and don'ts. But all were flawed, for none contained a way to atone for failing to perform the rituals. This is the problem of Islam today: how does one know if one is righteous enough to enter heaven? The only sure way to know is to die in *jehad*. Thus, when the best thinkers of Greek paganism encountered the gospel, they latched onto it as if they were leeches and Christianity were a patient that must be bleed. In doing so, they ensured the survival of Scripture, but they also sucked life from the message and messenger, leaving the visible Church the long shadow of tiny congregations of drawn-out Believers, persecuted but alive, teaching the doctrine of Jesus and being labeled heretics for doing so. And this is the condition of the Church of God about which Jesus, Paul and John warn us.

When Paul writes the majority of his epistles, the biggest problem faced was what had been addressed at the Jerusalem conference: converted Pharisees requiring that Gentiles become Israelites in the flesh before they could become spiritual Israelites. Paul's emphasis in his epistles centered around the idea that the flesh wasn't going to be saved, that a work of God was being done in the mind. Paul was looking into the perfect law of God and seeing the need for

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Love and Liberty to be more highly valued. Paul was seeing Christ when he looked into that perfect law.

When John wrote his epistles approximately 35 years later, converted Pharisees were no longer the problem. Instead, hearers only of the word had misapplied Paul's writings about Love and Liberty to such an extent that righteousness had suffered. John felt he needed to exhort brethren to keep the law. John said that saints must hold the doctrine of Jesus, which has two tenets, (1) keep the law of God, and (2) love your brothers and sisters.

In His Olivet discourse, Jesus continued His warning of false religion: "And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because of the increase of lawlessness, the love of many will grow cold" (Matt 24:11–12). This juxtaposition of false prophets and lawlessness (which is the definition of sin) suggests that these false prophets teach lawlessness. The teaching that the law has been done away would be a teaching of lawlessness. Going now to what Jesus wrote to the seven churches, Ephesus is commended because they "hate the works of the Nicolaitans" (Rev 2:6), while Pergamum is chastised for they had "some who [held] to the teaching of the Nicolaitans" (verse 15). As best as I can determine, Nicolaitans allowed a little compromising with the law; they stressed Christian liberty, reveled in that liberty, and allowed gross immorality and idolatry. They were of the household of faith. They weren't a pagan cult off in a corner of the empire. They were false teachers who were among the saints, leading saints astray. And the doctrine they taught is still being taught today by very sincere, but deceived ministers. The messages to the seven churches are for the day of the Lord.

In the United States, millions of devout people attend the church of their choice Sunday mornings, sing hymns praising Christ, listen to Scripture read and to a few good words preached about Christian living, then go on their way. Among these millions are individuals the Father is drawing to Himself, people who will have to unlearn most of everything they have been taught about Christianity. Perhaps this is the way it has to be to test who is genuine, a problem Paul recognized (1 Corth 11:19) before the visible Church expelled saints, labeling adherents to the doctrine of Jesus anathema.

Christ as our high priest is in charge of our salvation, which doesn't mean that we have no part to play: we must continually choose righteousness, while making doubly sure that we love our brethren and our neighbors. Because Christ is in charge, it becomes His responsibility to ensure that an individual the Father has given Him gets the nurturing needed for his or her salvation. How He does this is His prerogative. Usually, in the U.S. the individual finds his or her way to a body of Believers, becomes a part of that body, and learns through the folly of preaching. The model, when the Jerusalem conference of Acts 15 was held, was that the gentile convert learned the ways of God by listening to Moses read in the local synagogue each Sabbath (this was before Christians were expelled from synagogues). But Christ is not limited to using

past or present models. He will use whatever is necessary to nurture individuals, especially when doctrinal errors cause division within the Church of God.

For many decades the Church of God has held that there is only one true church, the concept itself true. But the definition of the one true church shrank as if it written on raw wool and washed in scalding water. About seventy years ago, the concept of one church became the work being done by one man, with statements made to the effect that God only works through one man at a time. How many apostles were there? Was John doing the work of God at the same time Paul was? Peter? James? Thomas? The principle of one man, one church was a limitation placed on Christ that was neither Scriptural, nor smart; for the one man should be read as Christ, and the one Church as all Believers drawn by the Father. The restricted usage of one man, one church might have seemed true at the time it was postulated. Indeed, the Church of God had suffered much under the continual attacks of Nicolaitans. It was barely alive, and it certainly wasn't impacting world events. Abraham Lincoln said he was looking for the church that had the commandments written over its lintel, and he never found that church, which is a horrible indictment of the Church of God at the time. So the unifying effect of the restricted one man, one church doctrine helped consolidate efforts until the Church became visible enough that world leaders again knew of its existence. But that doctrine allowed the splintering of the Church once Nicolaitans finally gained control of its administrative headquarters, and that doctrine now hinders cooperation between the various splinters, causing a redundancy of effort and more energy being spent to capture saints in other splinters than spent taking the gospel to the world. The carnality of too many saints has been showing. It's time to conceal our underwear, buckle belts and button up shirts.

The restricted one man, one church doctrine has caused the letters to the seven churches to be read as seven successive eras of the one true church. The reading cannot be supported textually; for Christ stands among all seven lampstands, and at least the last five of those seven churches will be on the world stage when Christ returns. Perhaps the best reading of the letters to the seven churches isn't as letters to seven 1st-Century churches that continue forward through time until Christ returns, but rather, as letters to seven churches present during the day of the Lord, that time period when John received his vision from Christ, which means that the martyrdom of the saints at Smyrna is a future event and not the martyrdom that occurred 303–313 A.D.

Presently, the restricted one man, one church doctrine has produced the situation where saints adhering to the doctrine will sell out other saints whom they think have backslid. It is a dangerous doctrine that justifies elbowing saints fellowshiping with other splinter groups out of the way, that justifies the limitation of love and the elimination of gospel competition, that will justify exchanging the names of other saints for personal protection in a place of

safety, which, most likely, will turn out to be the lake of fire. The doctrine needs to be eradicated. The test for saints that Christ establishes is do you believe He came in the flesh, and do you have love for one another, which encompasses the expanded reading of keeping the law of God. If a person or a splinter organization satisfies these two criteria, they are of God, and should be accepted as such. This doesn't mean that all splinters should necessarily become one administratively, but it does mean that they should certainly be showing love to one another. It means they should shelter and protect one another. And woe be it to the person who sells a computer list of names of saints to the Beast. I foresee this happening if this restricted one man, one church doctrine isn't abandoned. Brother betraying brother doesn't necessarily refer to siblings. And how can betrayal be better justified than to believe your brother commits spiritual error by being in another corporate entity.

The Church of God consists of everyone whom the Father has drawn. It is headed by one man, Jesus the Christ. It is the one true vine, but there are many leaves and tendrils on one vine. Many branches. All looking fairly similar. None exactly the same. No two leaves are exactly identical. But all grapes leaves look like grape leaves and not like oak or cherry leaves. Likewise, all saints and fellowships of faith will look similar, but not exactly alike. If this isn't a problem for Christ—He could rectify the situation at any time—then this shouldn't be a problem for us. We are deceived if it is.

Before Europeans began to mush dogs seriously, Eskimos used a fan harness or spread. Dogs ran in front of the sled in a fan-shaped spread, each dog about equal distance from the sled. Travel was possible, and this style of hitching a team to a sled endured for centuries. But when sourdoughs began using sleds for long distance travel across Alaska, they changed how a team was harnessed to a sled. The now familiar leadline was adopted, with a lead dog in front and matched pairs of dogs behind. The lead dog's job is to stay ahead of the team. It takes commands from the sled driver, executes those commands, then runs as fast as it can to keep the line straight. It only has to pull the weight of the line back to the pair of dogs behind it. It isn't out front because of its pulling power; it up front because it's fast and it will take orders. The work of pulling the sled is done by the wheeldogs. And this longline style of harnessing is a much more efficient way to pull a sled than using a fan harness; much faster. There is no other way to pull a sled and win a race.

The restricted one man, one church doctrine was an application of the lead dog, leadline harnessing principle. It was believed (I have heard many sermons stating this) that the lead dog, or end-time apostle would finish the race—

The Yukon musher Cowboy Smith was leading the Iditarod Race, and approaching the Bering Sea when he lost his lead dog (if I remember correctly, this was actually the third lead dog he lost, so he had started with backup leaders). His team didn't know what to do. He tried to continue, but the wheeldogs wouldn't pull into the hard, biting wind of a Bering Sea blizzard.

They would have followed a leader, and they could certainly pull the sled, but they wouldn't work on their own when faced with really severe weather. Cowboy Smith ended up tying his team to a scrubby tree and hiking back to a roadhouse to wait out the blizzard. Two teams that he had been ahead of passed him and won the race. He came into Nome after the storm let up with a jerry-rigged fan-shaped harness.

The Church of God today runs in a fan-shaped harness, with many of the dogs believing they ought to be leaders. But the Church doesn't yoke itself to the sled it pulls. It has to wait until Christ rearranges the harnesses.

The restricted one man, one church doctrine was authoritarian. It did not tolerate dissent well. It didn't share its decision-making process or rationale with saints. It kept problems bottled up. It empathized quality and godliness as it understood the concepts. It taught a terrific amount of Bible to more than a hundred thousand saints. It changed doctrines when it became convinced of error, and it left the legacy of having every minister it trained who retained its doctrines disfellowshipped by its successors. Its administrative decisions worked at the time, and perhaps were absolutely necessary. But its legacy is the flip side of the legacy of 1st-Century churches that might have tolerated too much Gnosticism. Perhaps there is no safe middle ground. Perhaps that is the lesson to be learned.

Corporate entities tend to calcify their doctrinal teaching, thereby limiting their ability to grow. If an organization teaches a certain understanding of prophesy, that organization becomes extremely reluctant to change its teaching when a rereading of the prophesy produces a better understanding. The entity tends to retreat to the one man, one church doctrine to retain its claim to having all truth.

Spiritual growth is of two types, the development of character and the revelation of knowledge. The latter type has been hampered because too many have seen the dastardly results of reintroduced Nicolaitanism sweeping saints away. It seems Satan's introduction of "Christian liberty" into the former corporate headquarters of the Church of God not only caused a falling away from the original faith a decade ago, but now restricts all rereading of text to prevent additional errors. But there is no safe middle ground: rereading must occur, or the Church of God will become a tradition-based belief system akin to other Christian faiths; it must remain text-based. (All belief systems are one or the other.)

Deceptions will occur. People usually doesn't need Satan to assist in their deception of themselves, not that Satan isn't eager to assist if help is required. The rich, young ruler was keeping the commandments while caring more for his possession than for God or the poor, thereby violating the commandments he thought he was keeping. Mid 1st-Century, converted Pharisees were teaching that gentiles had to become physical Israelites before they could become spiritual Israelites; they were deceived. Christians are under grace, not

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the external law. But by the end of the 1st-Century, grace had become licentiousness as Greek philosophers, combatting Gnosticism, wrestled control of the visible Church away from bishops trained by John, who was trained by Jesus. Nicolaitanism prevailed as deceived leaders taught their form of Christianity to equally deceived followers. A millennium and a half later, John Calvin again taught that the law of God was to be kept, but he couldn't free Christianity from Nicolaitanism, couldn't see that his own observance of Sunday was a violation of the law he stressed the importance of keeping. And the Church of God entered the 20th-Century about as dead as a wind-toppled apple tree, its roots fanned out and withered. Fruit, however, was produced on this downed tree so that when President Reagan called Communism the evil empire, the Church of God was broadcasting mightily that the true evil empire was really Satan's rule of the earth. Analogies always break down, though: the Church of God in the 21st-Century is splintered and a fifth of what it was a generation earlier. What remains is the spoiled fruit of the one man, one church doctrine that let the Church bear heavy crops for fifty years. But the Church has been pruned severely. Maybe it will crop again this year or next year. Whenever it does, the harvest will exceed all expectations.

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Conclusion

Jesus is the great end time prophet. He both prophesies and reveals understanding of prophecies. Additional prophecies aren't needed; additional understanding is, and has been needed. Perhaps a little of that understanding is contained within these pages.

The focus of Christ's earthly ministry wasn't universal salvation, which won't be offered until Christ's millennial reign. Rather, it was the announcement of this soon coming Kingdom of God's reign on earth. Fortunately for me and for whomever reads my scribblings, the arrival of that Kingdom has been long in coming. If Jesus would have returned in the 1st-Century as Paul and John expected, a few billion people would not have had their chance to receive eternal life: we weren't angels before birth as one denomination teaches. We didn't exist anywhere prior to our conception. I would not be if Paul would have been correct about him living in the last days. Luckily for me, Paul was inspired, not infallible.

My argument is that we have just entered the period in human history identified by the generic marker, *the time of the end*. I believe, as I write this a few days before Passover 2002, that a great work remains to be done by the Church of God. I would not be surprised to see more disciples drawn and tutored than have ever been in the Church. I don't think the 144,000 is a symbolic number of saints. I don't even think that number will be half of the saints three and a half years into the seven year long Tribulation. Without any more than a few textual suggestions, I think the Father will wear Satan and his rebellious cohorts out going after all of the disciples He will draw. Yes, many of them will be martyred. Zechariah saw two-thirds of the holy ones slain, with the remaining third tried as silver is refined (the 144,000 are only a portion of this one third). The Tribulation will be a difficult time for the saints. It will be far more difficult for all who wear the mark of the beast; because if not were not for the saints, the Father would direct that all of humanity (as well as other life) be killed.

Humanity killed Christ, its creator. Some limited debate exists as to whether Christ was hung on a stake or a cross. With the mark of the beast being the Cross of Calvary, the evidence seems overwhelming that Jesus was crucified on a Roman cross. And with all of humanity except the saints receiving that mark on the hands and foreheads, humanity flaunts its murder of its creator. By doing so, humanity worships Satan and his demonic cohorts. It is a seriously mistake to believe that the Father will accept the illogical argument that by wearing the Cross of Calvary a person worships Christ, who by His resurrection, overcame the most humiliating if not the most painful of deaths. What the person actually does is identify him or herself with the murderers of Jesus.

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The choice of whether to accept the mark of the beast will be everyone's. If, after accepting that Cross, you find yourself shaking your fist at God, demanding to know why He is doing all of this to you, consider that Cross. He can see it. His angels can see it. You will be advertising how you killed His Son. What would you do if you were God? Remember, the Logos was ready to wipe out the Congregation in the Wilderness and start over with Moses when the people prevailed upon Aaron to cast a golden calf; the Logos wasn't joking with Moses, no more so than when He told Noah to build the ark. God is love, but He also won't be mocked. He is patient, but there is a limit to the usefulness of extending additional patience. He is to be feared mightily if you are crosswise of Him.

That great dragon Satan deceives the whole world (Rev 12:9). No exception is given for saints, for Baptists, Mormons, Catholics, the Churches of God, or anyone else, including me. To the inverse of the extent that a person has the mind of Christ, the person can be deceived. To say that one isn't deceived is to verify the truth of the Scripture. To say that one isn't of the world is to play a semantic game with Christ, one at which the person will lose.

It is your responsibility to prove all things for yourself, understanding all the while that you can also be deceived. As Herbert Armstrong said on many radio broadcasts, *Don't believe me, believe your Bible*. So blow the dust off your Bible, and see if I have let the Bible interpret itself.

My rereading of prophecies finds seven years of Tribulation, not three and a half. I find two antiChrists, the latter coming when the Church of God has taught that Christ is to return. I find the entire focus of biblical prophecies is Greece, not Rome, with a Greek vertical axis spearing politics and philosophy. In fact, my rereading calls into question all of what the Church of God has taught about endtime prophecy. As a result, it needs to be intellectually challenged. But as I have written, the assignment of meaning is not a quantifiable activity; it is an art. Sometimes it is the spurning of tradition and the rethinking of what linguistic objects go with which icons.

I am a reader and a writer of texts. I usually write fiction, and someone is welcome to label this book as my latest work in that genre. But it is a fearful thing to wear the mark of the beast, or to reason away keeping the perfect law of liberty, then tell Christ that keeping it wasn't required. I suspect the person will be on his or her way to becoming a crispy critter. Judgment will already be upon the person.

Who Jesus is and where He lived during those missing eighteen years have been addressed by other authors in other books (and by myself in my essay collection, *A Philadelphia Apologetic*). The same can be said about His doctrine. But outside of the household of faith, His doctrine cannot be understood—and it is His doctrine that has not been well taught, as opposed to the message about who He is. It is understanding about eternal life being the gift of God, not inherited through fornication that needs published throughout the world.

It is His prophetic warnings about the antiChrist that need to spread within the Church of God and to all whom the Father will draw in the future. My intention is not to prove Jesus's divinity or His historic existence. Rather, my purpose is to actively combat the Nicolaitans who spurn prophecy and legalism as if they were leprosy. The only things legalism turns white are the robes of saints at Laodicea.

If you will, when years into the Tribulation, turn to Christ and begin to keep His commandments, having love for one another and getting rid of that Cross, you can be part of the first resurrection; for unless you are drawn by the Father, you will not (I cannot say this too strongly) keep the law. Your natural mind, having received Satan's broadcasts for years, is hostile to God. You might disagree; you might insist that a born-again Christian is under grace, not the law. . . . The test of whether you are drawn by the Father is your attitude towards the law of God: do you desire to keep it? or will you reason it away?

Let the Bible read itself—and go first to the teachings of Jesus, then read Paul rather than the other way around. Paul makes much more sense if you do. He is much harder to torque into Evangelical nonsense if a person remembers what Jesus said about teaching that the law can be broken (Matt 5:19). Paul won't be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven; so he didn't teach that the law had been done away. Rather, his teachings are that if it weren't for the law, he wouldn't have known what sin was. He would've had no light. He wouldn't have realized that a different law ruled his flesh. To teach anyone, especially disciples, otherwise is fitting oneself for a millstone collar.

It is particularly onerous for anyone in the household of faith to, through subtlety, cause little ones to avoid legalism and forsake keeping the law of God, worshiping now wherever and whenever their hearts tell them is right. The heart is deceitful. It can only be trusted to the extent that it has the law of God written on it—and to know that extent, a person has to return to the mirror of the perfect law, being both hearers and doers, and see the image of Christ in him or herself. If the person sees his or her natural face and if the person is truly drawn by the Father, then the person needs to seriously repent and return to the fold. There will then be great rejoicing in heaven.

Someone will conclude that salvation will be easier to obtain in the White Throne Judgment than now. This person won't want to respond to God's call because of the difficulty of overcoming Satan; the person's reasoning will be that without Satan around, choosing to obey God will be easy. To this person I say, Christ will return the sins He bears to their rightful owner, Satan, when *Yom Kipporim* becomes a reality prior to the beginning of His Millennium reign; Christ will not be bearing the sins of the world while He is King of kings, the reason why animal sacrifices will be reinstated in the Millennium. So in the White Throne Judgment, Christ won't bear your sins. Your death paid the price for your sins in this life, but no additional sacrifice remains for you. If you sin, which is the transgression of the law of God, after you are resurrected, you will

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experience the second death as the penalty for that sin. The easier time to obtain eternal life might actually be now, so I wouldn't gamble with salvation. But maybe you feel lucky.

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"of making many books, there is no end"

About the Author

A novelist, poet, artist working in the Northwest Coast Tradition, Homer Kizer has a Master of Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing from University of Alaska Fairbanks, and it is with those eyes of an artist and writer that he approaches the biblical narrative, finding in long-sealed prophecies an inspired reading.

Kizer began college as 16-year-old math major on an honor's scholarship, but at age 20, he opened a gunshop and built muzzleloading rifles for seven years. Following the 1973 gas shortage, he relocated to Alaska's Kenai Peninsula, where he owned and operated a chain saw and outboard dealership before fishing commercially out of Dutch Harbor and Kodiak.

He has published four novels, two novellas, a collection of essays, a book of poetry and two apologetics. He lectures on prophecy by invitation.

