

Commentary — From the Margins
The Righteous Disciple
Part Four

Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you,
O people of Israel, against the whole family that I
brought up out of the land of Egypt:

“You only have I known
of all the families of the earth;
therefore I will punish you
for all your iniquities.

“Do two walk together,
unless they have agreed to meet?

Does a lion roar in the forest,
when he has no prey?

Does a young lion cry out from his den,
if he has taken nothing?

Does a bird fall in a snare on the earth,
when there is no trap for it?

Does a snare spring up from the ground,
when it has taken nothing?

Is a trumpet blown in a city,
and the people are not afraid?

Does disaster come to a city,
unless the Lord has done it?

“For *the Lord God does nothing
without revealing his secret
to his servants the prophets.*

The lion has roared;
who will not fear?

The Lord God has spoken;
who can but prophesy?” (Amos 3:1–8 emphasis
added)

4.

When this world can get no farther from God than it then is, the midnight hour of the long spiritual night that began at Calvary will be upon humankind: the liberation of Israel will be at hand ... the Rapture will not be at hand, but a different sort of divine intervention will occur, a filling-with and empowering by the spirit of God [πνεῦμα θεοῦ — *breath of God*], which will cause the Torah to

be written on hearts and placed within the Christian disciple so that all Christians will *know the Lord*. Then, not before then, there will no longer be a need for Christian ministries directed at other Christians; for the Body of Christ will have entered the process of becoming the Bride of Christ. A man doesn't marry his own body, nor does Christ Jesus marry His Body for Christ is already at one with His Body, which lies dead as Jesus' body lay dead in the Garden Tomb for three days and three nights.

When returned to life, the greater Christian Church will no longer be the Body of Christ, but a new Body, a new creation, not a physical creation but a spiritual creation that can be likened to angels—

When spiritual life is returned to the greater Christian Church, the last Eve [the Church] will be *saved* through childbirth; i.e., though giving birth to first a spiritual Abel, then to a spiritual Cain 220 days later ... Cain will kill Abel, and the last Eve will, when the single kingdom of this world is given to the Son of Man, give birth to a third son, a spiritual Seth that only has to endure to the end to be saved.

When Christians are suddenly filled-with and empowered by the breath of God at the Second Passover liberation of Israel, the spirit-filled fleshly bodies of Christians will divide themselves into those Christians who constitute spiritual Abel, Christians who keep the commandments of God, striving to walk uprightly before God, and into those Christians who constitute Cain, offering as their sacrifice the fruit of the ground, the things of this earth, the false *goodness* that comes from the abominable practice of mingling the sacred with the profane.

In the seven years of the Tribulation, three parts, three divisions—Cain, Abel, and Seth—will constitute all of humankind, with all but a remnant of righteous Abel dying physically in the Affliction, the first 1260 days of the seven endtime years.

The question is, today, can humankind get farther from God than it is? Can *Christians* in northern Alabama that prayed to God to spare their lives when April tornadoes swept through the region, then gave thanks to God for sparing their lives get farther from God than they presently are? Can Christians that pitched in to help neighbors search Mississippi and Alabama debris fields for survivors get farther from God? Can Muslims that pray to God [*Allah*] to deliver Jews into their hands so that they can kill them get farther from God than they are? ... There is a difference between an American Christian and a Palestinian Muslim when it comes to having love for one's neighbor, this difference seen following catastrophic events, but less difference than imagined for Palestinian helps Palestinian after an Israeli response to unprovoked rocket attacks on the territory of the modern State of Israel.

When it comes to hating one's enemy, judging by the national celebration that occurred following Osama bin Laden's execution by Navy Seals, there is very little difference between American Christians and Palestinian Muslims when a great amount of difference should be seen. The shameful celebration of justice finally being administered to an enemy discloses a genuine lack of love embedded in the hearts of American Christians. Thankfully, America is slow to anger and quick to

forget what is buried in its heart, a disdain for the nation's enemies openly revealed in one particular word, *Gooks*.

And what is buried in the hearts of Americans? Do American hearts hold love for God and for neighbor and brother? Or are American hearts empty? Do American Christians, professing with their mouths that Jesus is Lord, truly hate their enemies, killing them with drone strikes, unseen and unmanned high altitude aircraft firing GPS guided missiles as if America were the prince of the power of the air? Have not America and American Christians made themselves the judge, juror, and executioners of their enemies? Where are the Christian protests of war abroad, or of the war going on within this country, a war fought with drought, tornadic winds and thunderstorms?

It is one thing for a Christian to do a job that needs to be done (e.g., dispatching a fox in a henhouse), but revenge belongs to God. And killing Osama bin Laden was a simple act of revenge ... Americans Christians are, overall, unwilling to trust God or to wait for God to address their enemies.

A fox, especially in winter's cold, is a beautiful, intelligent predator, a living animal that needs to be respected even when its life is taken. The animism of America's First Nation peoples is not to be followed, but the respect shown to an animal killed by First Nation peoples is worthy of examination—

To cheer when a person, any person, is killed is reminiscent of Roman values, when crowds cheered for gladiators and for the lions that mauled Christians. And in the coliseums, no one would confuse a cheering spectator for the Christians in the arenas.. No one should confuse an American who toasted or celebrated the death of Osama bin Laden for a Christian.

Taking the life of any living creature bestows upon the person a sobering responsibility: if the animal is killed for its pelt (e.g., a bobcat), the pelt needs to be care-for to the best of the person's ability. If the animal is killed for food, its meat is to be salvaged, all of it, and not wasted. If a human being is to be killed because the person poses a serious threat to the lives of others—an execution, such as that of Osama bin Laden—then prayers need to be said for the person, solemn prayers. Instead of celebrations in stadiums and on streets as occurred when news of bin Laden's death was announced, prayers asking for national forgiveness should have occurred; prayers asking that God forgive what bin Laden did in ignorance and hatred should have occurred. These prayers may not have been heard, but asking them would be recorded, and asking them would be consistent with having love for one's enemies.

The Christian in Alabama, or in Kansas, Missouri, Tennessee, or anywhere else in America that asks God to save the person when a tornado strikes nearby without asking God to spare his or her neighbors, and yes, enemies, is far from God ... even the pious in America are very far from God, for whom among the pious will pray that his or her enemy is spared before praying that the person's own life is spared.

In the Affliction, the two witnesses will have a job to do in bringing to the third part of humankind (from Zech 13:9) the endtime good news that all who endure to the end shall be saved (Matt 24:13), a job that will require them to call

forth plagues and droughts that they know will cause humans to die. But they do not celebrate having the power to take lives, but rather, wear mourning garb (rough clothing) as their outward manifestation of sorrow for doing what must be done.

The American Christian who cheered when Osama bin Laden was executed will, most likely, hear others cheer when he or she is killed; for God will not be mocked ... Christians are to love their enemies, which is not to say that Christians are to condone bad behavior or intolerable situations. A Christian will protect life, even the life of his or her enemy. But the life that is to be protected first is that of the Bride, meaning that a Christian will lay down his or her life for the life of other sons of God.

Greater Christendom, and especially American Christians, are very far from God, but apparently they can get farther away. It is, however, a very short step from celebrating the death of Osama bin Laden, an enemy of the United States but a good Muslim, and a Muslim cleric calling for the death of all Jews; it is a much shorter step than cultural pundits such as Glenn Beck imagine.

Recognizing good without a definition of *good* will have Christians such as Beck calling Christ Jesus good ...

And a ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And *Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.'" And he said, "All these I have kept from my youth."* When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, "How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." *Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?" But he said, "What is impossible with men is possible with God."* And Peter said, "See, we have left our homes and followed you." And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life." (Luke 18:18–30 emphasis added)

Are neighbors banding together with neighbors to hunt for tornado victims *good*, or are they simply honorable people displaying love for neighbors and communities? According to what Jesus told the rich young ruler, they are not good; for there is none good but the Father. They are, though, honorable, doing what seems right and just in their eyes.

I was on the Oregon Coast when the Columbus Day storm of 1962 struck, doing with straight line winds the type of damage usually caused by tornados ...

the Columbus Day storm, an extratropical cyclone, is likely the most intense wind storm to strike the Pacific Northwest since the January 9th, 1880, *Great Gale*. Its wind velocities were unmatched by the March 1993 *Storm of the Century* and by the 1991 *Perfect Storm*. The pressure at its center was comparable to a Category Four hurricane. Wind gusts were recorded in excess of 170 miles per hour (mph), with likely sustained winds of 170 mph occurring at Mt. Hebo (I lived just inland from Mt. Hebo, and I saw 200 foot tall Douglas firs bent by the wind until they touched the ground on the hillside above them).

During the Columbus Day storm, everywhere the winds made a bend they toppled a million boardfeet of timber. More than 11 billion boardfeet of timber was toppled; some estimates place the number at 15 billion feet.

Members of the Radio Church of God, a forerunner to Herbert W. Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God, were away from their homes when the storm struck—they were attending Feast of Tabernacles services, with most members from Oregon attending at Squaw Valley, California. Whereas orchards were uprooted and barns and homes leveled along the Coast and in the Willamette Valley, no member of the Sabbatarian Radio Church of God suffered any damage to his or her property even though neighboring properties were flattened. Apparently the properties of these Sabbatarian received supernatural protection; indeed, they were protected by God.

But trusting God to protect a person's life and his or her property requires first believing God, and true belief of God is in extremely short supply in America's heartland. What passes for belief is shallow, acceptance that God exists, and for most Christians is encapsulated in disobedience and open rebellion against God, this rebellion manifested in mingling the sacred [Christ] with the profane [the day of the invincible sun].

It would be foolishness for the Christian unwilling to keep the commandments to trust God to protect a person. Besides, most American Christians believe it is foolishness to trust God to protect them. American Christians will trust the nation's Armed Forces to protect them from enemies abroad; they will trust a storm cellar to protect them from a tornado; they will trust vaccines, medical professionals, drugs with names they cannot pronounce. But they will not trust God. They will trust that Social Security will be there when they need it, and that Medicare will continue to pay for most of the health expenses of the elderly. They trust that Safeway, Albertson's, Kroger, other super markets will have well stocked shelves. They trust that the Federal government will come to their rescue when a tornado strikes, or when the Mississippi floods. But they will not trust God to place an invisible hedge around them, thereby protecting both their persons and their properties. And in not trusting God to protect them and to set right whatever happens to them, they disclose just how far away from God they are and the entirety of the American culture is.

Was it coincidental that the properties of Willamette Valley Sabbatarians attending Feast of Tabernacle services in 1962 were unaffected by the winds of the Columbus Day storm? And when are coincidences not coincidences? Can that dividing line ever be clearly defined?

If American Christians in the Bible Belt truly believed God and had kept the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread this spring, would God have protected their persons and their properties? Would God have caused a tornado to lift and pass overhead as one did when I was teaching an evening Comp class on the campus of Southeastern Illinois College, Harrisburg, in 2002 ... I heard the train, but wasn't concerned for I have experienced supernatural protection numerous times.

Should I have been concerned? From a physical perspective, yes, but **no**, I had no reason for concern ...

In 1979, in heavy seas off Akutan Island, I had doubts about how I was going to get out of a situation in which I placed myself and my two person crew, but those doubts disappeared when our situation worsened. Included in the collection of poems titled, *Upriver, Beyond the Bend*, is the following autobiographical poem (one stanza has been omitted):

PERSPECTIVE—

the rip was running rough
but our ice was melting fast
we had to sell this load of halibut
had to cross Akutan Pass
had to reach Unalaska & Unisea
before warm weather stole hard work
but the heavy water beyond Lava Point
caused me to hesitate
should have caused me to turn around—
the seas were building
a storm was brewing
I could feel the quivering
tension in cold Bering water
wind transferred strength
from two hundred miles away ...

we didn't have much time
to get around Priest Rock
before seas would be too rough
so I headed into the rip—
the rolling rocked us as ripples
became racks of water threefourfive
feet high, rising, falling, jumping
jumping, moving, stretching, jumping—

on our crossing from Homer to Kodiak
even in the Barrens, we had flat seas
although we did see a little rough water

in Shuyak Pass
but nothing like this—
the rip became ridges
six, eight feet high
ridges that seemed too high
too rough for any boat our size
ridges that wrenched rudder
making steering impossible
I was on the throttle, off
on again, trying to keep up
stay ahead, keep our bow
into the next sea—
the ridges steepened
felt like cliffs
that sloughed away under us
letting us fall ten
twelve feet—
twelve became twenty
as the ridges
became spikes
jumping, leaping, straining
timbers & nails—
pitched & dropped & dropped
& dropped again till
I looked at the near shore
maybe a mile away
& wondered if I could walk
that far—

twenty feet become thirty
foot walls, high
as a house, then gone
breaking beneath us
& falling away
only to form again
before our bow could lift—
the forward hatch cover was ripped away
five feet of greenwater
swept over the wheelhouse
filling bilges
backing up scuppers
swamping the aft deck
low in the water, heavy
very heavy, the boat I knew
couldn't take another thirty footer—

I also knew I could walk that mile

but with us heavy
nearly helpless
the next wall was
maybe, ten feet
& the one after that six
hardly rough at all.

I expected to survive, but I also expected the 29-foot plywood boat to break apart when I first looked eastward at Akutan's Lava Point and wondered how I would get there. But when the situation became more dire, I knew without doubt that I could walk to the shore, an illogical expectation but one I held without the slightest bit of doubt—and as soon as I reached that point where mountains could be moved, the seas flattened and I pumped water out of the bilges and cabin all the way into Dutch Harbor. Coincidence?

Believing God is not the product of simpleminded faith—faith that ignores *clear and present dangers*—but rather, the type of faith that causes the Christian to live his or her life as if the person truly believed God exists.

I've had timber thrown off the top of me; I've had seas flattened, weather changed, an apparent bubble placed around me. So I wasn't concerned when teaching at Southeastern Illinois and heard the train; for the tornado lifted and passed some three hundred feet overhead according to the weather service, and that is what I have come to expect since 1975. Of course, I moved my class to an inside room and away from windows that might break, but that was merely the prudent thing to do when a tornado was on the ground and headed toward the college—and to have dismissed the class and have students on the roads wouldn't have been wise.

America is not great because the nation is good ... there are none *good*, no, not one. There are some who are honorable, some who have love for neighbor and brother, but even those few Christians who keep the commandments and their faith in Christ Jesus are not good. Rather, they are obedient, believing God to the point where they willingly live out of sync with this world, being in it but not of it.

So, can American Christians who beg God for protection in emergency situations seriously expect the Most High God to bail them out of tough situations when they are unwilling to walk uprightly before Him, keeping His commandments, including the Sabbath commandment, and practicing being holy as He is holy, when things are going well with them?

The question is not difficult to answer: can the Christian who refuses to walk as Jesus, an observant Jew, walked really expect God to hear his or her prayers?

If God the Father turned His face away from Jesus when Jesus, on the cross took upon Himself the sins of Israel in this world, then will not He also turn His face away from America and American Christians because of this nation's lawlessness?

They stirred Him to jealousy with strange gods;

with abominations they provoked him to anger.
 They sacrificed to demons that were no gods,
 to gods they had never known,
 to new gods that had come recently,
 whom your fathers had never dreaded.
*You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you,
 and you forgot the God who gave you birth.*
*The Lord saw it and spurned them,
 because of the provocation of his sons and his daughters.*
*And He said, "I will hide my face from them;
 I will see what their end will be,*
 For they are a perverse generation,
 children in whom is no faithfulness.
 They have made me jealous with what is no god;
 they have provoked me to anger with their idols.
 So I will make them jealous with those who are no people;
 I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.
 For a fire is kindled by my anger,
 and it burns to the depths of Sheol,
 devours the earth and its increase,
 and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains." (Deut
 32:16–22 emphasis added)

The children of Israel provoked the Lord into making from *the nations* a second nation of Israel, a nation circumcised of heart, a foolish nation that is to provoke to jealousy the outwardly circumcised nation of Israel (see Rom 11:11, 14) so that some of Abraham's descendants through biological Isaac might be saved ... uncircumcised Christians who refuse to live as Judeans provoke no Jew to jealousy, whereas the uncircumcised person who keeps the Sabbaths of God greatly provokes all of Judaism.

By extension, the Christian who refuses to keep the commandments of God, who refuses to be holy as God is holy, who spurns modest attire, who hates and kills his enemies is unmindful of Christ Jesus and has forgotten the One who gave birth to the Christian Church—and because of these Christians having first turned their backs to the temple of God, God will hide His face from them in their time of need. He won't be there to protect them when they need protection. Hence lawless Christendom had better trust in its armies and its technology to defend and protect persons and properties.

But those armies are unable to protect against thunderstorms and tornadic winds. They are unable to flatten seas or turn back an enemy's hatred. These are the things that God reserves to Himself—and the type of protection He extends to His sons that believe Him, the saints that keep the commandments and their faith in Jesus.

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